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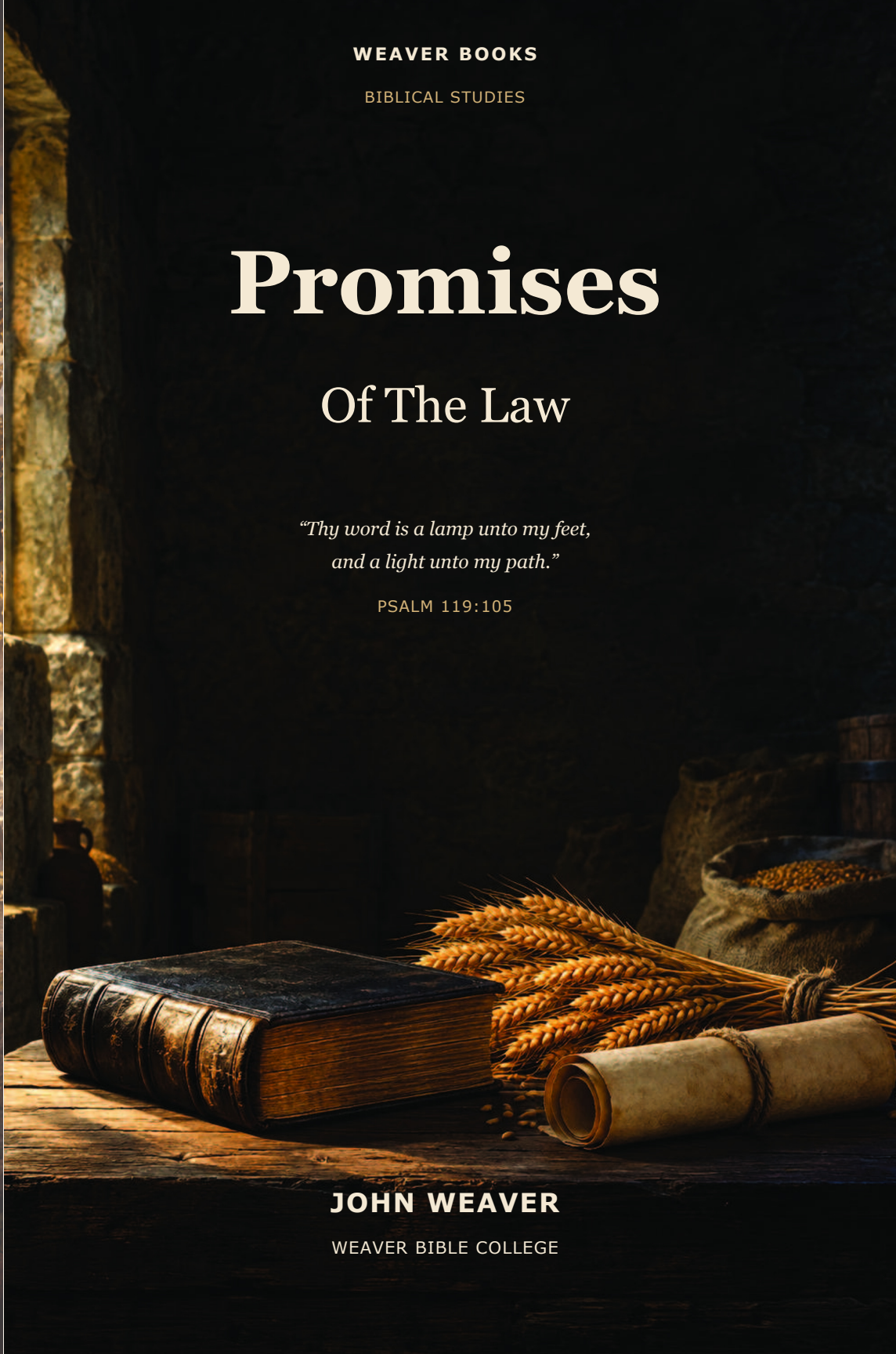
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Promises

Of The Law

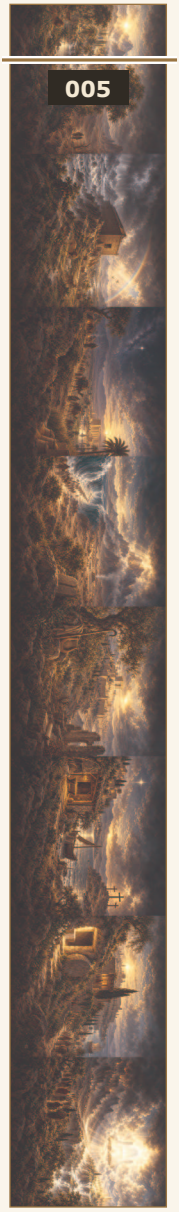
"Thy word is a lamp unto my feet,
and a light unto my path."

PSALM 119:105



JOHN WEAVER

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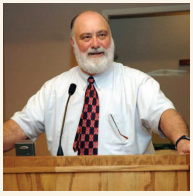
Great peace have they which love thy law: and nothing shall offend them.

PSALM 119:165

God's law speaks to more than prohibition. John Weaver examines its promises, the relationship between obedience and blessing, and the responsibilities of individuals and communities. This extended sermon series follows these themes through Scripture, inviting careful consideration of the law's continuing moral significance and its place in the life of faith.

"The promise is that, if we learn to live without covetousness, we learn to live with contentment and satisfaction."

JOHN WEAVER



John Weaver

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CHAPTER 1

Promises Of The Law

Part One

The Promises of the Law

Introduction: The Promises of the Law

In 1 Kings 8:56, Solomon is praying, and in his prayer he says: "Blessed be the Lord that hath given rest unto his people Israel, according to all that he promised. There hath not failed one word of all his good promise, which he promised by the hand of Moses his servant."

The very phrase "the promises of the law" seems strange to our ears and contradictory to our thinking. When we think of the law, we normally think of precepts, statutes, and judgments, but we do not usually think of promises. Yet the truth is that there are indeed promises in the law. Solomon certainly mentioned these in 1 Kings 8:56.

The word "promise" is really not necessary in order to have a lawful and legitimate promise. Usually, when we are making

promises, we will say something like, “I promise you.” But if Steve and I were going to work together, I could say to him, “If you will do this for me, then I will do that for you.” Basically, I have promised him that if he responds in one particular way, then I will respond in another way. It is a promise, although I have not used the word “promise.” In other words, I have obligated myself, and therefore it is indeed a promise.

The Nature of a Promise Without the Word 'Promise'

There is a valid, and vital, distinction between the promises of the law and the promise that was given to Abraham, Isaac, and David. The promise of salvation is in opposition to the law for a very simple reason: the law could not save, did not save, and was never intended to save. No one can be justified or saved by keeping the law. No one can be saved by works.

Distinction Between the Promises of the Law and the Promise of Salvation

Salvation is not by the law and could never be by the law. Romans 3 and verse 20 tells us, "Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin." So very pointedly, there is no one justified by deeds of the law. Romans 3 and verse 28 says, "Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law." Again, the Word of God is telling us we cannot be justified by the law. Galatians 2 and verse 16 says, "Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ. Even we have believed in Jesus Christ that we might be justified by the faith of Christ and not by the works of the law, for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified."

It cannot get any plainer than this: "for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified." The apostle said in Galatians 2 and verse 21, "I do not frustrate the grace of God, for if righteousness came by the law, then Christ is dead in vain." Righteousness cannot come by the law for salvation. Then, in Galatians 3 and verse 18, the apostle said, "For if the inheritance be of the law, it is no more promise, but God gave it to Abraham by promise."

The Law's Demands and Human Inability

The law demands three things from every individual: a personal obedience, a perfect obedience, and a perpetual obedience. Obviously, no one can render to the law that which it demands. The only one who has ever rendered to the law that which it demands is none other than the Lord Jesus Christ, who is indeed the God-man.

Suppose, by a miracle of God's grace, you were to become absolutely perfect today, never sinning again for the rest of your life, either in thought, word, or deed. You were absolutely, totally perfect. Would that get you into heaven? The answer is no. What about all those sins that you committed before you became perfect?

They would have to be dealt with, and they would have to be answered. So obviously the Scripture is making it clear that no one can be justified by the works, or by law keeping. All of that is absolutely impossible.

Now when I speak concerning the promises of the Law, I'm not necessarily speaking about salvation. Salvation did not come by the Law. Salvation came by faith in Jesus Christ. However, I'm going to point out in the future that there could not be a real, genuine salvation without the Law. Although salvation did not come by the Law, it came by the Lord Jesus Christ, who rendered perfect obedience to the Law and was also the perfect sacrifice.

Biblical Evidence for Promises in the Law

If you look in 1 Kings 8 and verse 56 again, Solomon says, "Blessed be the Lord that hath given rest unto His people Israel, according to all that He promised." Note now, "There hath not failed one word of all His good promise, which He promised by the hand of Moses His servant." So obviously there are promises in the Law. The Law contains promises, and Solomon is declaring that not one word of God's good promise had failed.

In Joshua 23:14, the promises are referred to as good things. Joshua says, "And behold, this day I am going the way of all the earth," that is, he is dying. "And ye know in all your hearts and in all your souls, that not one thing hath failed of all the good things which the Lord your God spake concerning you; all are come to pass unto

you, and not one thing hath failed thereof." Joshua is emphasizing again that every good thing spoken by the Lord had come to pass. In Joshua 23, the promises are referred to as the good things. Now turn to Hebrews 8:6.

Hebrews chapter 8, verse 6, says, “But now hath he,” that is, the Lord Jesus Christ, “obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much also he is the mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises.” If the New Covenant was established upon better promises, then obviously the Old Covenant had promises as well. The New Covenant is superior; it has better promises. Obviously, then, we do indeed have promises in the Old Testament.

Examples of Implied Promises in the Law

In fact, the Bible tells us in 2 Corinthians 1:20, “For all the promises of God in him are yea and amen to the glory of God.” It does not matter whether the promise is in the Old Testament or in the New Testament. All the promises in Jesus Christ are yea and amen to the glory of God the Father.

You do not have to have the word “promise” in order to have a promise. Turn to Deuteronomy 7, beginning at verse 12. There are promises clearly stated here without the use of the word “promise”: “Wherefore it shall come to pass, if ye hearken to these judgments, and keep and do them, that the Lord thy God shall keep unto thee the covenant and the mercy which he sware unto thy fathers. And he will love thee, and bless thee, and multiply thee. He will also bless the fruit of thy womb, and the fruit of thy land, thy corn, and thy wine, and thine oil, the increase of thine kind, and the flocks of thy sheep, and the land which he sware unto thy fathers to give thee. Thou shalt be blessed above all people. There shall not be male nor female barren among you, or among your cattle. And the Lord will take away from thee all sickness, and will put none of the evil diseases of Egypt, which thou knowest, upon thee, but will lay them upon all them that hate thee.”

Obviously, there are promises in these verses, although the word "promise" is not used. God is saying, If you obey Me and do that

which is right, I promise you blessings. Here are some of the blessings that are listed.

Deuteronomy 29:9 says, "Keep therefore the words of this covenant, and do them that you may prosper in all that you do." Here is an implied promise: If we are obedient, then God is going to make us prosper in all that we do.

This thought is exemplified in what God said to Joshua: "Only be thou strong and very courageous, that thou mayest observe to do according to all the law, which Moses my servant commanded thee. Turn not from it to the right hand, or to the left. Why? That thou mayest prosper, whithersoever thou goest. This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth, but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein. For then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then shalt thou have good success."

God says, As long as you obey Me, you're going to be prosperous, and you're going to have good success. You have to understand that there are indeed promises in the law. There are also curses in the law. I'm not going to go over this now, because I'll be going over it in the future. But if you want to understand the sanctions mentioned in the Bible—and a sanction can be either good or bad, positive or negative—all you have to do is read Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 28, because there are blessings if you obey, and there are curses if you disobey.

The Danger of Denying the Old Testament

What is happening today, and what has happened in time past, is that many people are coming out and denying and denigrating the Old Testament. One pastor recently said publicly in a sermon, and I am quoting, that it is time to “unhitch from the Old Testament.” This same pastor also denounced the Ten Commandments.

I can understand an unbeliever denouncing the Ten Commandments and even denouncing the Bible, but not a Christian and not a pastor. I can understand why in Washington and in our state capitals they do not want the Ten Commandments posted, because that makes a hostile work environment for them. They do

not want to be reminded, “Thou shalt not steal” and “Thou shalt not kill.” But for a pastor to say, “It’s time to unhitch from the Old Testament,” and for so many to relegate the Old Testament to a theological dump, is another matter.

They are basically saying that it has no value, no application, and is worthless; they are denying the validity of the Old Testament. Let me give you some Scripture: 2 Timothy 3:16–17: “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for correction, for reproof, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished, unto all good works.”

The Bible says all Scripture is inspired of God. All Scripture is God-breathed. If the Old Testament is Scripture, then it is inspired. The only way to deny the Old Testament is by denying that it is the inspiration of God. This passage clearly tells us that we are to honor the Old Testament because it is Scripture. It is God-breathed.

When our Lord was tempted in Matthew chapter 4, He was in the wilderness forty days and forty nights, tempted of the evil one. Satan said, “If thou be the Son of God,” but in each temptation, “if” is a first-class condition with the indicative, which means “since.” Satan was not questioning whether He was the Son of God. Literally, he was saying, “Since you are the Son of God, command these stones that they may be turned into bread.”

Our Lord responded, “It is written, man shall live by every word of God that proceedeth out of his mouth.” If the Old Testament is the Word of God, it proceeds from the mouth of God. Therefore, anyone who would deny, denigrate, and denounce the Old Testament must deny, denigrate, and denounce God Himself, because God breathed these Scriptures. They are indeed the inspired Word of God. Romans 15 and verse 4 also reminds us of this.

The Apostle Paul said, “For whatsoever things were written aforetime,” speaking of the Old Testament, “were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope.” Whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning. Now the interesting thing is this: both Romans 15:4 and 2 Timothy 3:16–17 have reference to the Old Testament. How do we know that? Because when Paul wrote in

Romans 15:4 and in 2 Timothy 3:16–17, the New Testament had not been completed. He was talking primarily of the Old Testament. Of course, it would apply to whatever was written in the New Testament at that particular time, but primarily it had reference to the Old Testament.

In 1 Corinthians 10, the Apostle Paul took what happened to Israel in the Old Testament and applied it to the Corinthian church. Twice in that passage he says, “These are our examples.” So he brought what happened to Israel out of the Old Testament and made an application to the Corinthian church in the New Testament.

Christ Came to Fulfill, Not Destroy, the Law

Matthew 5:17 says, “Think not that I am come to destroy the law or the prophets. I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill.” The impact of “Think not” is the same as when the Apostle Paul said, “God forbid.” Literally, when our Lord says, “Think not,” here is what He is saying: “Don’t even let this thought enter into your mind. Perish the thought.” Do not even begin to let this thought enter into your mind, that He came to destroy the law or the prophets. He did not come to destroy, but to fulfill.

The word “destroy” literally means to abrogate, nullify, set aside, or invalidate. God said, “I didn’t come to do that.” He came to fulfill. “Pleroo” means to put into full force as continuous. Therefore, He says, “Don’t even let this enter into your mind.”

Verse 18 continues: “For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle, shall in no wise pass from the law till all be fulfilled. Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven. But whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.”

Our Lord said in Matthew 5:17, “Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil.” The phrase “the law and the prophets” refers to the totality of the Old Testament.

The Old Testament as 'the Law and the Prophets'

In Matthew 22, our Lord was asked, “Master, which is the great commandment in the law?” He did not cite one of the Ten Commandments. 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 neighbour as thyself.” Then He said, “On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.” All the law and the prophets.

When we think of the divisions in the Old Testament, we speak of the law, the historical books, the poetical books, the major prophets, and the minor prophets. In Bible times, however, they simply referred to the Old Testament as the Law and the Prophets. The first five books were written by Moses, which is the Law. All the other books are prophetical books, even though some are historical. There is prophecy in the historical books, and there is prophecy in the poetical books. Look at Psalm 22, Psalm 23, and Psalm 24. There is prophecy there. Thus, the Old Testament was referred to as the Law and the Prophets.

In John chapter 1 and verse 45, Philip said to Nathanael, “We have found him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.” Note that he called them “the law and the prophets.” Acts chapter 13 and verse 15 says, “After the reading of the Law and the Prophets, the rulers of the synagogue sent unto them, saying, You men and brethren, if you have any word of exhortation for the people, say on.” Again, the Bible says this, and we are referring to the Old Testament. What do the Law and the Prophets refer to? The totality of the Old Testament.

In Acts chapter 24 and verse 14, the Apostle Paul says, “But this I confess unto thee, that after the way which they call heresy, so worship I the God of my fathers, believing all things which are written in the Law and in the Prophets.” Here it is again.

One last passage here is found in Acts chapter 28 and verse 23. Paul is now in his own hired house and he is teaching. The Bible says, “And when they had appointed him a day, there came many to him into his lodging, to whom he expounded and testified the

kingdom of God, persuading them concerning Jesus, both out of the law of Moses, and out of the prophets, from morning till evening."

Our Lord said, "Do not even begin to think, don't even let it enter into your mind that I've come to destroy the law or the prophets. I have not come to destroy, but to fulfill." If our Lord did not come to set them aside, obviously it would be unwise for you and I to try to set them aside. It would be unwise for you and I to try to unhitch from the Old Testament or to denounce the Old Testament in any way whatsoever.

Continuity Between the Testaments

What we should do today is develop their implications and applications in our present-day setting. There are very serious problems in denying the Old Testament and its application for today. The New Testament is in the Old Testament concealed, and the Old Testament is in the New Testament revealed. In other words, there is a continuity between the Old Testament and the New Testament. If you denigrate, denounce, and deny the Old Testament, then by the same token you are denigrating, denouncing, and denying the New Testament. According to the Blue Letter Bible, there are 855 quotes from the Old Testament in the New Testament.

That does not count the 493 allusions in the New Testament to the Old Testament, nor the 138 possible allusions back to the Old Testament. The New Testament has its foundation in the Old Testament. If you try to destroy the Old Testament, at the same time you are going to destroy the New Testament as well.

The very first verse in the New Testament teaches the continuity of the Old Testament and the New Testament. Matthew 1:1 says, "The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham." You have to know who David and Abraham were in order to know who Jesus Christ really was. The Canon Bible website says that Jesus Christ Himself quoted from 24 different Old Testament books.

When He said, "I came not to destroy the law or the prophets, but I came to fulfill," He did not set them aside. Psalm 119:89 says,

“Forever, O Lord, is thy word settled in the heavens.” Obviously, it is not going to be set aside either.

There is a lot being said today against the book of Genesis, particularly against the first 11 chapters. Those chapters are being denied by evolutionists and by men who do not believe the doctrine of creation. Why is there such an attack on the first 11 chapters of Genesis? The answer is that every major doctrine of the Bible is found in those chapters in seed form. If you can destroy those first 11 chapters, then you can destroy the entire Bible. Obviously, if you are going to deny the Old Testament, you are also going to deny the New Testament.

Grace Does Not Nullify the Law

If you do away with the Old Testament, how in the world will you ever learn anything about the holiness, justice, or mercy of God? How would you know who Jesus Christ is or about His so great salvation? How could you prove who He was without the Old Testament? How could you see prophecy, or understand prophecy being fulfilled, if you deny the Old Testament?

The truth of the matter is this: grace does not destroy the law of God. We often hear Christian people say, “Well, we're not under the law; we're under grace,” and they have no idea what they are saying. It is true that we are not under the law as a standard for justification. The law of God is not our standard for salvation. It is true that we are under the standard of grace, but grace does not nullify or negate the law of God.

The Old Testament is full of law, but it is also full of grace. In Genesis 6:8, “But Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord.” Anybody who has ever been saved has been saved by grace. If you think people in the Old Testament were saved by law keeping, you are mistaken. No one has ever been saved by keeping the law. Everyone who has ever been saved has been saved by grace.

Even Moses, the lawgiver, prayed in Exodus 33:13, “Now therefore I pray thee, if I have found grace in thy sight, show me now thy way, that I may know thee, and that I may find grace in thy sight, and consider that this nation is thy people.” He was praying for

grace. Even Gideon, in Judges 6:17, said, “If I have now found grace in thy sight, show me a sign that thou talkest with me.” Simply because we are justified by grace and not by works does not mean that we can live any way we choose.

That does not mean that we can live any way that we please. The apostle Paul dealt with this in Romans 6:1–2: "What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid." That is, perish the thought; do not even think that. "How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?"

When someone says, "Well, I'm saved by grace, I can do as I please," the answer is no. Grace enables us to be obedient. The law gives us direction as to how to live and please God. It teaches us that we are dead to sin because of the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Four Explanations for Negative New Testament Passages About the Law

When you read through the New Testament, you will find negative passages concerning the law of God. If you take the time to look at the context, you will find four explanations for those passages; usually, the context will involve one of these four. The first is simple: some passages deny or denounce the law of God as a means of justification.

We are not saved by works or by keeping the law. No one has ever been saved by keeping the law, nor can we be saved in that way. The Bible says in Galatians 2:16, "Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ. Even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified."

That is a negative passage. It denounces the law as the means or standard of justification. Most Christians read Romans 6:14—"For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace"—and say, "Aha, I'm not under the law; I'm under grace."

What about the context? The Apostle Paul begins his argument for justification by faith alone in Romans 3:31, and it runs through Romans chapter 8. If you read the context of Romans 6 and 7, you will find what the Apostle is saying there: we are not under the standard of the law for justification, but under the standard of grace.

Romans 6:14 does not say that the law has been done away with, invalidated, negated, abrogated, or set aside. It simply says that the law is not our standard. The opposite appears in Galatians 5:4: "Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law, you're fallen from grace."

When Paul says someone is fallen from grace, he does not mean that the person was saved and lost salvation. He means that seeking justification by the law is seeking justification by a different standard. Christ is absolutely no effect unto you, and you have fallen—that is, left the standard of grace. You can be justified by grace or seek justification by the law. Seeking justification by the law is seeking justification by works, not grace. Therefore, when Paul says we are not under the law, but under grace, he is not saying the law has been done away with; he is saying it is not our standard for justification.

How about Romans 10:4? The Bible says, "For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone that believeth." This does not say Christ ended the law, but that He is the end of the law for righteousness. Why is He the end of the law for righteousness? Because He obeyed it personally, perfectly, and perpetually, and is the only one who worked out a perfect righteousness. I do not need to seek righteousness by my works because Christ worked it out perfectly. Righteousness is only by Jesus Christ, who alone gave to the law that which it demands.

There are negative passages that deny and denounce the law as a means of justification. Secondly, there are negative passages that refer to the death-dealing nature of sin in relation to the law. The apostle said in Romans 7:10, “And the commandment which was ordained to life I found to be death.” What? The commandment which was ordained to life I found to be death. Really, Paul? How could you say that?

Paul also said, “I was alive once without the law, but when the law came, sin revived and I died.” In other words, I thought I was all right. Until I saw the spiritual application of God’s law, then sin revived and I died. That which I thought was life turned out to be death to me. Why? Romans 6:23 says, “For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.” And 1 John 3:4 says, “Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth the law, for sin is the transgression of the law.” These passages refer to the death-dealing nature of sin in relationship to the law.

There are also passages that deny and denounce the law as a means of justification, passages that refer to the death-dealing nature of sin in relationship to the law, and, thirdly, passages that deal with the curse of the law. Galatians 3:10 says, “For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse, for it is written, Cursed is everyone that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them.” God says that if you do not render to the law that personal, perfect, and perpetual obedience, you are under its curse. The curse of the law comes upon those who sin. Now, look at Galatians 3:13.

Galatians 3:13 says, "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us, for it is written, Cursed is everyone that hangeth on a tree." The law that cursed us, our Lord has redeemed us from that curse by being the perfect sacrifice and giving perfect obedience. Consequently, we are no longer under the curse. This passage speaks of the curse under which people remain who have not been redeemed by the work and blood of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Christ did not redeem us from the Law; He redeemed us from the curse of the Law. The Law is still in effect, still in existence, and still applicable. There is not even any sanctification without the Law, because the Law is our direction. We have to obey God's Word, and as the Holy Spirit works in us and enables us to obey, we are indeed sanctified.

When you look at a context, the negative passages can be explained in four ways: by denying or denouncing them as a means of justification; by the death-dealing nature of sin in relationship to the Law; by understanding them as passages referring to the curse of

the Law; or by recognizing passages that refer to the ceremonial ordinances, the rituals in the Old Testament.

Ephesians 2:13-17 says, "But now in Christ Jesus, ye who sometimes were far off, are made nigh by the blood of Christ. For He is our peace, who hath made both one, hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us, that wall that separated, having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances, for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace, and that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby."

Notice verse 15: "having abolished in His flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments." He does not stop there and is not talking about the Ten Commandments. He says, "even the law of commandments contained in ordinances." We are talking about the ceremonies and rituals of the tabernacle and temple.

Jesus Christ has fulfilled all of the pictures, all of the types, and all the emblems; He is reality. We no longer have the picture because we have the reality. That is why the Bible says in 1 Corinthians 5:7, "For even Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us." I said to one brother this morning who was asking me about this passage, "Had you rather kiss your wife or kiss a picture of your wife?"

Whatever you have of Jesus Christ in the Old Testament is a picture. What we have in the New Testament is the reality. He took away all of these rituals; by that I mean He fulfilled them. In reality, none of God's law has been set aside; it has been fulfilled through these rituals, ceremonies, pictures, and types.

In the Old Testament, to worship God, you had to bring a sacrifice and come to the priest, the altar, and the temple. If you did not do those things, you did not worship God. The same is true in the New Testament. If you do not do those things, you do not worship God. Yet, according to Hebrews 13:10, Jesus Christ is our altar, our sacrifice, our Great High Priest, and our temple. We come to God the Father bringing Jesus Christ as our sacrifice; as our Great High Priest, He brings us to God the Father.

Everything that the law required in those ceremonies, He is in reality. Therefore, He has fulfilled it very clearly.

Any time you find a negative passage in the New Testament concerning the law, study the context, and you will find that one of these four explanations accounts for the negative context or passage concerning the law.

The Word of God tells us in Romans 7:12, "Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, just, and good." If the law is holy, just, and good, why would God nullify it? Why would God abrogate it? Why would God set it aside? When you posit a change in the law, you also have to posit a change in God, for His Word is like Himself. It is immutable. Let me show you.

Go back in your Bibles to Matthew 5, and look at verse 17 again. Also turn in your Bibles to Psalm 119 and find that passage. Some of you may have what I am going to refer to; some of you may not, but that is okay. Our Lord says, "Think not that I am come to destroy the law or the prophets, I'm not come to destroy, but to fulfill." So he says, "I'm not come to set aside any of the Old Testament, not the first little bit."

Then he says, "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." Notice that in verse 17 he says, "the law or the prophets," but in verse 18 he singles out the law: "Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled."

Let me show you how precise our Lord is and how He tells us that the law is still valid. He said, "Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled." What is a jot, or yod? In Psalm 119, look right above verse 73. Psalm 119 is an acrostic, and each eight verses begins with the same Hebrew letter. If your Bible includes these letters, you will find a yod, or jot, right above verse 73. If it is not in your Bible, watch my finger as I make this Hebrew letter. You did not see it. Number one, you were not looking. Number two, it is too small. It is like our comma, only smaller. Our Lord said, "It's easier for heaven and earth to pass away than it is for the smallest letter in the Hebrew alphabet to pass from the law till all be fulfilled."

That sounds pretty valid to me and pretty abiding. Then he goes on to say this in verse 17 again: "Think not that I'm come to destroy the law or the prophets, I'm 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." What is a tittle?

Let me write the English word "little" for you. Watch my finger: L-I-T-T-L-E.

I made my T's a little fat like my L. How do you know a T from an L? I will solve that problem by going back and putting this marker across my T. How do you tell the L from the I? I will go back and put a dot over the I. A tittle is not even a letter; it is a small mark distinguishing two Hebrew letters. Jesus Christ said it is easier for heaven and earth to pass away than for the smallest Hebrew letter or the smallest distinguishing mark between two Hebrew letters to pass until all of the law be fulfilled.

That sounds abiding to me. That sounds valid to me. When He says, “Do not even begin to think that I’ve come to set it aside. No, I’ve come to fulfill,” He means it.

Secondly, if God’s law is so holy that it required the perfect obedience and death of His Son, after all that our Lord paid and suffered, why would God now set it aside? Why would He nullify it or abrogate it? Why would He say, “I didn’t mean it; it’s no longer there”? Of course not. God is not going to abandon His holy law, for His law is an expression of Himself.

The Bible proclaims God’s immutability in Malachi 3 and verse 6: “I, the Lord, change not. Therefore, you sons of Jacob are not consumed.” I want God to be immutable and unchangeable because I do not want to be consumed. God’s law is like Himself. It is immutable.

There is no way in the world that you can deny the Old Testament without denying the New Testament. When you have 855 direct quotes from the Old Testament in the New Testament, ripping out those quotes destroys the New Testament, not counting all the allusions. Our Lord did not come to set aside the law or the prophets.

He came to fulfill. We are going to see the absolute importance of the Old Testament and the promises of the law. They are there.

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we bow to Thee this day. We thank You for Your Word, Your truth, and the totality of Your Word. We do not have two Bibles; we have one Bible: one God, one word, one truth, one salvation. We commit ourselves unto Thee and ask You, Father, to establish our thoughts, give us direction, teach us, and build us up in the most holy faith. In Thy name we pray, amen.

CHAPTER 2

Promises Of The Law

Part Two

Introduction and Review of Part 1

In 1 Kings 8:56, Solomon is praying and says, “Blessed be the Lord that hath given rest unto His people Israel according to all that He promised. There has not failed one word of all His good promise, which He promised by the hand of Moses, His servant.” It is exceedingly clear that there were, and there still are, promises in the Law.

It is absolutely insane to try to deny the validity and authority of the Old Testament. When you destroy the Old Testament, at the same time you destroy the New Testament, for the Old Testament is the very foundation on which the New Testament rests. It is impossible to jerk or destroy a foundation without destroying the building that rests upon it. So anyone who wishes to unhitch from the Old Testament, or deny the Old Testament or the Law, is actually denying the New Testament as well.

There are 855 direct quotes from the Old Testament in the New Testament. That does not count the 493 clear allusions in the New Testament to the Old Testament, nor the 138 possible allusions. We must also remember that Jesus Christ Himself quoted from 24 of the Old Testament books. Obviously, our Lord counted those books as authoritative and valid. I do not know about you, but I am not interested in trying to defy the Lord Jesus Christ or stand against Him.

We must remember what He said in Matthew 5:17: He did not come to destroy the Law or the Prophets. “The Law and the Prophets” is a phrase that refers to the totality of the Old Testament. Scripture says in 2 Timothy 3:16-17 that all Scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable. Romans 15:4 says, “Whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning.” In 1 Corinthians 10, the Apostle took what happened to Israel in the Old Testament and applied it to the Corinthian Church in the New Testament. Twice in that passage he said that everything that happened in the Old Testament was our example.

It is very important that we understand and remember how every negative passage in the New Testament concerning the Law can be explained. Everything has to be taken in its context. When you consider the context of these negative passages, you will find that one of four explanations will explain the negative passage in the New Testament.

First, there are those passages that deny and denounce the Law as a means of justification. The Law was never given for justification. It is never, in the Old Testament or in the New Testament, nor has it ever been, a means of salvation. When people try to tell you that folks in the Old Testament were saved by their works, but people in the New Testament were saved by grace, that's a bunch of hooey. You better not believe that at all.

Anyone who has ever been saved has been saved by grace through faith. You are never saved by works. That is why Galatians 2:16 says, "Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified."

No one has ever been saved by keeping the Law. So there are those passages that denounce the Law as a means of justification. Secondly, there are those passages that speak concerning the death-dealing nature of sin in relation to the Law. Romans 7:10 says, "And the commandment, which was ordained to life, I found to be unto death." The Law is indeed that which pronounces the death penalty against us.

Thirdly, there are those passages that refer to the curse of the Law. In Galatians chapter 3 and verse 13, it says, "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree." Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law, but He did not redeem us from the law. There are passages that refer to the law and the curse of the law in relation to those who disobey.

Fourthly, there are those passages that refer to the ceremonial law. In Ephesians chapter 2, the Bible tells us that He has taken the handwriting of the commandments which was contained in ordinances out of the way. It is talking about the ordinances, or the ceremonial laws, in the Old Testament.

None of God's law has been negated, or nullified, or abrogated, or set aside. Even the ceremonial law that was observed in the tabernacle and the temple has not been negated or set aside. It has been fulfilled. Instead of the emblems and the types and the symbols, we now have the reality. In the Old Testament, if you wanted to worship God, you had to go to the tabernacle or the temple. You had to go to the high priest, bring a sacrifice, and have it on the altar.

We have a great high priest, Hebrews chapter 4, the Lord Jesus Christ. We have a sacrifice, Jesus Christ: 1 Corinthians 5:7, even Christ our Passover sacrificed for us. We have an altar, Hebrews 13 verse 10; we have an altar where they who serve the tabernacle, that is, those symbols and emblems, have no right to eat. Certainly, we have a Temple, because the Bible tells us in Revelation chapter 21 verse 3 that the tabernacle or the Temple of God is with men. He is our tabernacle. He is our Temple. Everything that was pictured in the Old Testament is now fulfilled in Jesus Christ.

The Bible says in Romans 7 in verse 12, "Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good." When you are considering God's law, and God has pronounced it holy, just, and good, then you would have to ask yourself this question: why would God nullify it?

Why would he abrogate it? Why would he set it aside? Why would he destroy it? You have heard me say this, I hope, many times, and you will remember it: a king rules by his law. That certainly is true in reference to God. God rules by His law because His law is nothing more and nothing less than an expression of His will for His subjects and for His children. I hope you are beginning to see the insanity of anyone who tries to denounce the Old Testament or denounce the Law.

In Matthew chapter 5 and verse 17 our Lord said, "Think not that I am come to destroy the Law and the Prophets. I am not come to destroy but to fulfill."

The word destroy is a very powerful Greek word. The word literally is kataluo, and it literally means to destroy, to throw down, to cut loose, to subvert, overthrow, to abrogate, to nullify, to dismantle, to set aside, and to bring to naught. So Jesus Christ says, “Do not even think this. Do not let it enter into your mind that I have come to set it aside, or make it naught, or destroy it, or nullify it.” No, He said, “I have come to fulfill.” The word fulfill is pleroo, and it means to fill and to keep full. He came, then, to set it into action as continuous. He did not come to destroy it.

When you hear someone denouncing the Law or denouncing the Old Testament, remember that the Law and the Prophets refer to the totality, the Old Testament. If you deny the Law, you are denying the Old Testament. If you deny the Prophets, you are denying the Old Testament as well. But here is the truth; listen carefully: without the Law there is no knowledge of sin. Without the Law there is no knowledge of sin. So ask yourself this question: What is sin?

The Law Reveals the Knowledge of Sin

How do we know what is right and what is wrong? How do we know what is a violation of God's will and what is not a violation of God's

will? Good and evil are determined by God and not by man. Every time man tries to determine for himself what is good or what is evil, he brings the curse of God upon him, because man always subverts and perverts that which is good, and he will end up calling it evil, or that which is evil, and he will end up calling it good.

Isaiah 5:20 declares, "Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter." Here is the woe, here is the curse: woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; woe unto them that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; woe unto them that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter. This is a curse that God places upon individuals who try to subvert and pervert that which He has declared good and that which He has declared evil. In order to avoid this curse, we must know what is good and what is evil based upon God's Word.

The Apostle Paul has clearly pointed out our source of knowledge. I quoted Romans 3:20 last week, but I certainly did not emphasize that which I am going to emphasize today. Last week I was concerned with pointing out those passages that mainly denounce the law as a means of justification. This is one of those passages, but Paul goes a little further: "Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight."

And then he tells us why: "For by the law is the knowledge of sin." It is the law of God that teaches us, shows us, and demonstrates for us that which is sin. While the law is not for our justification, that does not mean that the law is useless. There are many uses of God's law, but salvation is not one of them.

Matthew Henry said it like this: "That law which convicts and condemns us can never justify us. The law is the straight rule that which points out the right and the wrong. It is the proper use and intendment of the law to open our wound and therefore not likely to be our remedy." Notice that he said the law is the straight rule. The darkened, depraved heart of man could never, ever have formed an adequate conception of sin in and of itself.

All you have to do is look around this world and look at what so many people do in calling evil good. Look at the perversions and

wickedness; many people are celebrating it and announcing it, and governments are subsidizing it.

In Proverbs chapter 30, our Lord points out what people are like. This is a very accurate description of people in our day and age as well. Beginning with verse 11, God says, “There is a generation that curseth their father, and doth not bless their mother. There is a generation.” Can you imagine? Here is someone dishonoring their father and mother, in violation of the fifth commandment.

Verse 12 says, “There is a generation that are pure in their own eyes, and yet is not washed from their filthiness.” It is astounding that some of the most wicked, vile, corrupt people think they are doing nothing wrong. Verse 13 says, “There is a generation, O how lofty are their eyes! and their eyelids are lifted up.” Pride, arrogance, and haughtiness. Then verse 14 says, “There is a generation, whose teeth are as swords, and their jaw teeth as knives, to devour the poor from off the earth, and the needy from among men.” Certainly, people have no hesitancy in cursing God or cursing man, and they have no hesitancy in destroying the innocent. The law is that which reveals for us sin and the sinfulness of man.

The law that reveals the sinfulness of man and tells us what sin actually is, is the same instrument which shows us and teaches us the holiness of God. We will never know really and truly how holy God is until we realize how sinful and wicked sin is, because sin is the opposite of God's holiness.

That's why He said in Jeremiah 44 in verse 4, "Oh, do not this abominable thing that I hate." You can never know God's holiness without knowing the sinfulness of sin, and you will never realize the wickedness of sin until you understand God's law and comprehend that law. The law, then, says the Apostle Paul, gives us the knowledge of sin.

The Law Exposes Sin's True Nature

In Romans chapter 7, verse 7, the Apostle asks, "What shall we say then? Is the law sin?" He says, "God forbid," that is, perish the thought. Don't even let that thought enter into your mind. Then the apostle says, "Nay, I had not known sin, but by the law." The law is

that which exposes sin. He says, "For I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet."

You have to remember that Paul was a Pharisee. The Pharisees reveled in their self-righteousness and in what they considered their obedience to the law. They would have been considered the fundamentalists in the days of Jesus Christ, the ones who said they were holding to God's law. But the truth of the matter is, the Pharisees had no understanding of the depth, spirituality, or applications of God's law, because they believed that if they had not physically committed a sin, they were not guilty of violating the law. If they had not taken a knife and plunged it into a man's heart, they were not murderers; or if they had not physically committed the act of adultery, they were not adulterers. They limited the law of God to that which was external. Now, the Apostle Paul said in Acts 23 and verse 6 that he was a Pharisee and the son of a Pharisee.

Pharisaism ran in Paul's family. In Philippians chapter 3, the Apostle Paul tells us what he could boast in and what he was proud of as an unsaved man, as a Pharisee. He says, "Though I might also have confidence in the flesh. If any other man thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more: Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee; Concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless."

Then he goes on to say, "But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ." The interesting thing is that Paul said, "touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless." Was the Apostle Paul, before his conversion, Saul of Tarsus, really blameless? Did he have an earned righteousness? The answer is yes and no. It depends upon which perspective you are coming from.

From the perspective of a Pharisee, yes, he had it, because they had a perversion of God's law. They misrepresented God's standard. I can tell you that I can jump flat-footed, right straight from the ground, twenty feet up in the air. You are going to say, "Preacher, you couldn't do that." Sure I can—as long as you allow me to define a foot. If I can make my own definitions, I can do whatever I want.

That is exactly what these Pharisees did. They defined the law in their terms so that they could keep their law, quote unquote, and therefore thought they were righteous and blameless. But the answer is no according to God's Word, because the Apostle Paul was a sinner. He says so himself. He did not keep God's law. He did not render to God's law that personal, perfect, and perpetual obedience that it demanded.

When you look back in your Bibles to Romans 7 and verse 7, notice what he said: "What shall we say then? Is the law sin? God forbid. Nay, I had not known sin, but by the law." The law gives us a knowledge of sin. Then he says, "For I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet."

Paul singles out the tenth commandment: “Thou shalt not covet.” Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor’s wife, his ox, his ass, his maidservant, or his manservant. In other words, thou shalt not covet, period. The Apostle Paul said he had not known lust except the law had said, “Thou shalt not covet.” When he saw the law in its true application, it revealed his sinfulness and wickedness, and he realized that he had violated God’s law.

The tenth commandment is simply an aspect of this. When Paul confesses that he violated the commandment, “Thou shalt not covet,” he is also confessing that he violated the rest of the commandments, especially the first: “Thou shalt have no other gods before me,” because Colossians 3:5 tells us that covetousness is idolatry.

Here was a man who thought he was blameless and had touched the righteousness which was in the law. He did so according to his Pharisaical interpretation, but not according to the truth of God. Albert Barnes explains Paul’s meaning: “I should not have been acquainted with the nature of sin, the sin of covetousness, that is, except for the law.”

The desire might have existed, but Paul would not have known it to be sinful or experienced the raging, impetuous, and ungoverned propensity he experienced when he found it forbidden. Man without law might have strong feelings of desire. He might covet what others possessed, take property, or be disobedient to parents, but he would

not know it was evil. The law fixes bounds to his desires and teaches him what is right and wrong. It teaches him where lawful indulgence ends and where sin begins.

The word lust here is not limited as it is with us. It refers to all covetous desires and all wishes for that which is forbidden. I could look at David's shirt and say, "I like that shirt. I want that shirt." That is covetousness. If I asked him to give it to me and he said, "No, you're not getting my shirt," the desire itself would still be covetousness.

You know what that would do? That would make me want it more. Of course, this is exactly what he is saying. As I told you last week, your lust is whatever you set your desires upon. Epithumia is the Greek word. Epi is a preposition meaning upon. Thumos refers to passion, desire, or lust. So your lust is whatever you set your desire upon. This is why the word lust here is not limited as it is with us. In other words, when we think of lust, we think of sexual immorality. No, the word lust is a very broad term and includes basically everything.

The Apostle Paul said he had not known sin except by the law. In Romans 7:8 he says, "But sin, taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence." In other words, when he saw the law, he saw how terrible he was as a sinner. He says, "For without the law sin was dead." As Albert Barnes explains, you could have all kinds of strong desires and lusts, but you would not know they were sin unless God had said so. "For without the law sin was dead," but with the law sin is alive. Now look what he said in verse 9: "For I was alive without the law once," that is, as a Pharisee, "but when the commandment came," when he understood it in its spirituality, "when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died."

So here he is in Philippians chapter 3, thinking that he is touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless. All of a sudden, God opens his eyes and shows him the spirituality of the law. Now sin revives and he dies because he realizes he is not sinless. He is not blameless. He is condemned because he has violated God's law and God's Word.

Galatians 3:19 asks, “Wherefore then serveth the law?” Why do we have the law? The question is answered in the same verse: “It was added because of transgressions.”

The Law Was Added Because of Transgressions

“Till the seed should come to whom the promise was made,” that is, Jesus Christ, “and it was ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator.” Let us take the first part of verse 19: “Wherefore then serveth the law? It was added because of transgressions.” God gave us the law in order that we might see and understand sin, for by the law is the knowledge of sin.

I want to give you two quotes, one a little more lengthy than the other. The reason I want you to hear these quotes is to show you that what I am telling you is not something I am making up or something I have dreamed up. What I am trying to show you is the historic position of Christianity, what has been believed down through the ages. In the next several messages, I am going to amplify these points.

Albert Barnes explains Galatians 3:19: “The meaning is that the law was given to show the true nature of transgressions, or to show what was sin. It was not to reveal a way of justification, but it was to disclose the true nature of sin, to deter men from committing it, to declare its penalty, to convince men of it, and thus to be an ancillary to and preparatory to the work of redemption through the Redeemer. This is the true account of the law of God as given to apostate man, and this use of the law still exists. This effect of the law is accomplished.” Barnes then gives six ways in which it was accomplished.

First, the law shows us what God requires and what is duty. As Micah says, “He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee.” It is a straight rule of what is right, and to depart from that is the measure of wrong.

Second, it shows us the nature and extent of transgression by showing how far we have departed from God’s law. Third, it shows the just penalty of transgression and is thus fitted to reveal its true

nature. Fourth, it is fitted to produce conviction for sin and thus shows how evil and bitter a thing transgression is.

Fifth, it shows its own inability to justify and save men, and is a preparatory arrangement to lead men to the cross of the Redeemer. At the same time, sixth, the law was given with reference to transgressions in order to keep men from transgressions.

It was designed to restrain and control them by its denunciations and by the fear of its threatened penalties. When Paul says that the law was given on account of transgressions, we're not to suppose that this was the sole use of the law, but that it was a main or leading purpose. It may accomplish many other important purposes, but this is one leading design, and this design it still accomplishes.

It shows men their duty, reminds them of their guilt, teaches them how far they have wandered from God, and reveals the penalty of sin. It shows them that justification by the law is impossible and that there must be some other way by which men must be saved. Since these advantages are derived from it, it is important that the law should still be proclaimed, its high demands and penalties constantly held up to men's view. So, what he's trying to tell you is, you cannot deny, denounce, or throw away the law of God. To do so throws away the knowledge and penalty of sin, as well as the restraint that holds men back from sinning. So the law has not been done away with.

John Gill says, “It was added because of transgressions. 430 years after the covenant made with Abraham. It did not succeed it, nor take the place of it, and so make it null and void, but was over and above unto it for the sake of restraining transgressions, which had there been no law, men would not have been accountable for them.”

They would have gone into them without fear and with impunity. But the law was given to lay a restraint on men by forbidding such and such things on pain of death, and also for the detecting, discovering, and making known transgressions they are, their nature and consequence. These the law charges men with, sets before them in their true light and proper colors, convicts them of them, stops their mouths, and pronounces them guilty before God. Moreover, the law entered over and above any other revelation God was pleased

to make, that the offense might abound, either that particular offense, the sin of Adam, or the justness of the imputation of it to his posterity. Gill goes on to say that the law was given for the punishing of transgressions, for which it curses and threatens with death, and inflicts it on Christless sinners.

Hence it is clear there can be no justification by it, and yet it is not useless and insignificant. So, he is telling us there are proper uses of the law.

Now, I want to show you from the Scripture that everything Albert Barnes said and everything John Gill just said is nothing other than what the Scripture teaches. Turn in your Bibles to 1 Timothy chapter 1. I hope I get to go over this passage in these messages in a little more detail. But note what he says, beginning there with verse 8: "But we know that the law is good, if a man use it lawfully."

The Law Restrains Sin

Now let me just stop right there. We know that the law is good if a man use it lawfully. What does that imply? That some may try to use the law unlawfully, such as using it as a standard of justification or trying to be saved by good works. That is what it implies. Just as there is a lawful use of the law, there is an unlawful use.

How is the law used lawfully? Paul gives us one way in verse 9: "Knowing this, that the law is not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless and disobedient." Now, wait a minute. What is he saying? The law is not made for a righteous man.

When I went to the university, there were a lot of rules. Some students broke the rules and were expelled, but the rules never bothered me because I did not want to break them anyhow. I wanted to do what was right. So as long as a man wants to do what is right, the law basically has nothing to do with him in that sense of the word. But here is what Paul says: "Knowing this, that the law is not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless and disobedient."

Now, if you take these two verses and go over them, you can see how most of these are violations of the Ten Commandments. Verse 9 says, "Knowing this, that the law is not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and for sinners,

for unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers." There is a Third Commandment, a Fifth Commandment, and a Sixth Commandment. "For whoremongers"—there is a Seventh Commandment—"for them that defile themselves with mankind, for menstealers, for liars, for perjured persons, and if there be any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine."

So why then did God give the Law? To restrain. The Law says, if you do this, you are going to die. Here is the penalty for violating this Law. One of the things the Law does, besides giving us a knowledge of sin, is that it restrains.

I think I have told you this before, but I will tell you again because it is a good illustration. Years ago, I was preaching in a Midwestern state, and the pastor asked me if I would go with him just to invite a man to the church services. He told me the man was not going to come, but they wanted to invite him anyhow. The man had gone through a bitter divorce, and he was very, very bitter. We met him and invited him to church.

I tried to talk with him a little bit, and I had not talked to him five minutes before all of a sudden, all the venom and poison came out. Speaking of his wife, he said to me—and these were his exact words—"I should have killed her. I should have killed her. I should have killed her." Then he said, "If I'd killed her, I'd have been in prison now in seven years."

Now she has practically everything I ever worked for. Here is this man saying that I should have killed her. Why? Because he said I could have been in prison and out in seven years. Had he known that the penalty for murder was death, and had that state applied that penalty, he may not have thought it would have been better to kill her. You see what I am saying?

The law was meant to restrain. As long as the law is not applied, there is no restraint.

Now look in your Bibles to 1 Corinthians 15:56. It is a very short verse: "The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law." Isn't that amazing? The sting of death is sin. Why are we so afraid to die? Why do we not want to die? Because we know we are guilty.

Then he says, “the strength of sin is the law”; that is, we understand the curse of the law.

The Law Gives Sin Its Strength

Listen to this short quote from Albert Barnes: “The idea is that sin is the cause of death. It introduced it. It makes it certain. It is the cause of the pain, distress, and agony, and horror which attends it. And had there been no sin, men would not have died. If there were no sin, death would not be attended with horror or alarm.”

For why should innocents be afraid to die? What is innocence to fear anywhere in the universe of a just God? The fact, therefore, that men die is proof that they are sinners. The fact that they feel horror and alarm is proof that they feel themselves to be guilty and are afraid to go into the presence of a holy God. That is true. It is God’s law that gives a sting to death. Why? Because the law places a curse on all those who violate God’s holy law.

Men may deny sin intellectually, but they cannot deny it practically. You can say, “I have not sinned. I am not sinning. I will never sin.” You can deny it intellectually all you want, but you are going to die. That is going to prove that you are a sinner, for the wages of sin is death.

I heard a story a long time ago about people who even deny sickness. They say it is all in the mind, an imagination. I heard about the little boy who ran into the house and told his mother, “Mother, mother,” he said, “you know that lady down the street who has been sick so long?”

She says, “No, no, son. You mean the lady that thinks she's been sick.” He said, “Well now she thinks she's dead.” You can deny it all you want, but you're going to die. And death is the proof of sin.

How do we know what sin is? The Apostle Paul said in Romans 3:20, “For by the law is the knowledge of sin.” First John 3:4 gives us the clearest verse in the entire Bible that tells us what sin really is: “Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law.” What is sin? It is transgressing God's law. How do I know that I sin? I have violated God's law; I have broken

His commandment. Sin is a transgression of the law. It is impossible to sin without violating God's law.

Sin Defined as Transgression of the Law

God's law reveals sin. It is the law of God that determines what is right and what is wrong, what is good and what is evil. It tells us what we may do and what we may not do. Men do some things that are unwise, unnecessary, or imprudent. But if something is not a violation of God's law, it is not sin. Sin is a violation of God's law. Mark it down in your mind: when you sin, you violate God's law. It is only by His law that we have the knowledge of sin. Without God's law, we do not know what sin is.

Applications and Warnings

Let me make a couple of applications. First, when anyone suggests that we unhitch from the Old Testament or that the Law has no value, he is not only being unbiblical; if he teaches others the same, he is leading them astray. When someone—there are multitudes of Christians who will do this—naively says, “Well, we're not under the law,” ask him to define sin and tell you what sin is. Without the law there is no sin, or we do not know what sin is. There has to be a standard of right and wrong, and that standard is God's law. God's law was never given to us for justification, but it has been given to us for a number of other reasons as well. The law of God has not been nullified.

It has not been abrogated. It has not been destroyed. If it has, we would have no knowledge of right and wrong, or of good and evil. If we are not under the law as a standard for revealing sin and knowing that which is holy and right, how do we determine what is sinful? How do we determine how to act? How do we determine what is a violation of God's law or God's will? Is moral relativism an acceptable standard? Of course not. What about situational ethics? Of course not.

Situational ethics says, “Well, prostitution is wrong here in America because we have all these jobs that people can do. But if you go over to Thailand or Vietnam, or someplace where there is very little, well, it is all right there because it helps the economy.” Really?

I have news for you: “Thou shalt not commit adultery” applies in Thailand and Vietnam, just as it does in America. If you do away with God's law, you do away with the standard of what is right and what is wrong.

If the law has been destroyed, abrogated, nullified, or set aside, what is wrong with murder? What is wrong with adultery, fornication, theft, or idolatry? If the law has been set aside, why not embrace these things with open arms and take the attitude, “Let us eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow we may die”? It is absolutely insane. If the law has been nullified, set aside, and abrogated, how is God going to judge sinners who die without Jesus Christ? What standard will He use? He will judge them by their works. Really? There has to be a standard by which to judge them by their works. You do away with the law, and you not only do away with sin; you do away with judgment as well.

Where there is no law, there is no conviction of sin. One of my favorite quotes from the old Puritans is that “the sharp needle of the law must precede the scarlet thread of the gospel.” In other words, our wounds have to be opened and pricked before the gospel thread comes in and sews them up. Where there is no law, there cannot be any conviction of sin. Where there is no conviction of sin, there cannot be any repentance. Where there is no repentance, there is no salvation. Without the law, there is no salvation.

The law does not save us, nor are we justified by the law. Yet Scripture shows that without the law there is no salvation. When someone denies God’s law, he is only denying sin and the knowledge of sin and, in essence, denying salvation as well.

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we bow to Thee this day. We thank You for Your Word, Your truth, and Your law. Help us to understand that by the law is the knowledge of sin, and that without the law there is no knowledge of sin. Help us not to sin against Thee, not to violate Thy law, but to obey and honor Thee. In the name of Jesus Christ, we ask and pray. Amen.

CHAPTER 3

Promises Of The Law

Part Three

Review of the Series and Key Principles

This is the third message in a series on the promises of the law. Solomon prayed in 1 Kings 8:56: “Blessed be the Lord, that hath given rest unto his people Israel, according to all that he promised: there hath not failed one word of all his good promise, which he promised by the hand of Moses his servant.” We are talking about the promises of the law. Even the book of Hebrews tells us that the New Covenant is based upon better promises, indicating that there were promises in the Old Covenant as well.

One of the principles I learned years ago is simple: repetition aids learning. We need to hear things over and over, and usually, after hearing them a number of times, at least a little begins to sink in. We need to understand the relationship between God's law and His grace. His grace does not cancel out His law. His law is indeed His will, His revealed will for His people.

You cannot throw away the Old Testament without throwing away the New Testament. The Old Testament is quoted something like 855 times in the New Testament, and there are about 439 plain allusions in the New Testament to the Old Testament. That does not count the possible allusions. There is continuity between the Old Testament and the New Testament. You cannot destroy a foundation without destroying the building.

The Bible says in Deuteronomy 29:29, “The secret things belong unto the Lord our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law.” In the first message, I gave four ways that every negative passage concerning the law in the New Testament could be explained. I reviewed them in the second message, and I will take the time to review them again in this third message. I probably will not do so next week, but remember this: every negative passage in the New Testament can be explained in its context.

Four Ways Negative New Testament Passages on the Law Are Explained

First, there are passages that deny the law as a means of justification. The law was never given for justification. It is not our standard for justification, was never meant to save, and no one has ever been saved by keeping the law. Galatians 2:16 says, “Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified.”

Second, there are passages that refer to the death-dealing nature of sin in relation to the law. Romans 7:10 says, “And the commandment, which was ordained to life, I found to be unto death.” Paul said he was alive once without the law, but when the commandment came—when the spirituality of God's law and its real application came—“sin revived, and I died.”

Third, there are passages that refer to the curse of the law. Whenever we sin, we violate God's law, and there is a penalty. Galatians 3:13 tells us that “Christ hath redeemed us from the curse

of the law, being made a curse for us." He did not redeem us from the law; He redeemed us from the curse of the law.

Fourth, there are passages that refer to the ceremonial law and its fulfillment, such as Ephesians 2:13–15. The ceremonial law has not been done away with, abrogated, or set aside; it has been fulfilled. Instead of the pictures, symbols, and emblems, we have the reality. Jesus Christ is our High Priest, our altar, our sacrifice, and our temple.

Without the law there is no knowledge of sin. When you try to do away with the law, you do away with the knowledge of sin. Romans 3:20 says, "Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin." We know what sin is because God gave us His law.

Without the Law There Is No Knowledge of Sin

He determines what is right and wrong, what is holy and what is not holy. That is why 1 John 3:4 says, "Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law." It is the law of God that points out, marks out, and elucidates sin. Sin is the transgression of God's law. It is impossible to sin without violating God's law. If there is no violation of God's law, it is not sin.

There are many things that may be unwise, unnecessary, and imprudent. I may be extremely stupid, but that is not sin unless it violates God's law. Any time you sin, you violate God's law, for sin is a transgression of the law. Once you violate that law, you bring yourself under the penalty of that broken law; you bring yourself under the curse.

Where there is no law, there is no knowledge of sin. Where there is no knowledge of sin, there is no conviction. Where there is no conviction, there is no repentance. And where there is no repentance, there is no salvation. So I ended last week with this statement: without the law, there is no salvation.

How could I make that statement? That is the only point I am going to make today—indeed, only part of it, because next week I will finish the second point. Without the law, there is no salvation.

The First Reason: Christ Was Made Under the Law to Earn Righteousness

So how can I say that, knowing that we are saved by grace through faith? We are not saved by our law-keeping. We are not saved by doing good. We are not saved by good works. So how can I say that without the law there is no salvation? Here is my first answer; I am going to give you two. The second answer will come next week. The first answer is this: in order to understand that statement, you must understand the person and work of Jesus Christ in salvation.

Galatians 4:4–7 says, "But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father. Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ." Mark that passage, because although we will look at many other passages, we will come back to emphasize this one.

Notice verse 4: "But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law." Just as surely as Jesus Christ was made of a woman, He was also made under the law. Why was Jesus Christ made under the law? Verse 5 gives the answer: "to redeem them that were under the law."

When our Lord redeemed us from under the law, He did not redeem us from the law, but from the curse and the penalty of that law. Galatians 3:13 says, "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree." Galatians 3:10 explains why we are under the curse: "For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them."

In the first message that I preached, and as I have said numerous times in messages in the past, there are three things that the law requires of every individual: a personal obedience, a perfect obedience, and a perpetual obedience. No one has ever rendered to the law that which it demands except the Lord Jesus Christ. When

you do not give that obedience to the law, you bring yourself under the curse, and God says that you have to continue in those things.

Here is an illustration to help us grasp this concept and to prove that the law cannot save you, will not save you by your own works. Let us suppose that today you became absolutely perfect; you never sinned again, not in word, thought, or deed. From this day forward, you gave to the law a personal, perfect, and perpetual obedience, just as it demanded. Here is my question: would that be sufficient to get you into heaven? The answer is no, because what about those sins that you committed before you became perfect?

The answer is very clear: no one is ever given to the law that which it demands except the Lord Jesus Christ. Have you ever stopped to consider this? One sin is sufficient to damn a man. One sin is sufficient to condemn a man. That is all it takes—just one sin. Remember the passage in James chapter 2, verses 10 and 11: "For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all."

"For he said, Do not commit adultery, do not kill. Now if thou commit no adultery, yet if thou kill, thou art become a transgressor of the law." So all you have to do is violate the law one time, and you are brought under its condemnation. If you violated the law once before you became perfect, then obviously your perfection is no good, because you still have to answer for that sin that you committed before you became perfect.

Now go back to Galatians 4 and look at verse 4 again. The Bible says, "But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law." Just as surely as Jesus Christ was made of a woman, He was also made under the law. His birth placed Him under the law.

Here is a thought that you need to meditate upon: He who gave the law now becomes subject to the law that He gave. The lawgiver is now subject to the law that He made. As one of Adam's race, partaking of our nature, He was subject to the law of God. As a man, He was bound by its precepts and requirements, subject to the control of the law. He took His place under the law that He might

accomplish a very important purpose: to redeem us who were under the law.

The Word of God emphasizes the fact that Jesus Christ took upon Himself our nature. Hebrews 2:14 says, "Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage."

"For verily he took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham." Verse 17 says, "Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people."

The Bible tells us that He took upon Himself our nature, the nature of the seed of Abraham. He did so because it behooved Him to be made like unto His brethren. So the question is, why was Jesus Christ made of a woman? The answer is clearly so that He might take upon Himself our nature and be like His brethren. Since He was made of a woman and took upon Himself our nature, He was also made under the law. It was necessary for Jesus Christ to be made of a woman and under the law, that He might become our substitute, our sacrifice, and our surety.

Jesus Christ is the God-man; that is, He is perfectly God and He's perfectly man. Perfect God, perfect man. John 1:1–3 says, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made." Jesus Christ is the living Word. In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. Verse 14 says, "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father)." The Word was made flesh. First Timothy 3:16 says, "And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory." The Bible tells us that the great mystery of godliness is that God was manifest in the flesh.

Jesus Christ is unique. That is why John 3:16 says, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son." The words "only begotten" are monogenes, meaning that He is one of a kind; He is unique. The reason He is one of a kind is that He is perfect God and perfect man. The Bible therefore tells us clearly that Jesus Christ is the God-man. Jesus Christ is unique because He is perfect God and perfect man.

In John 10:30, He said, "I and my Father are one," clearly identifying Himself as God. In John 14, Philip said, "Show us the Father, and it sufficeth us." Jesus answered, "Philip, have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me? He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." We are talking about God becoming flesh and assuming our nature.

Not only is Jesus Christ perfect God and perfect man, but the Bible calls Him the second man and also the last Adam. In 1 Corinthians 15:45 we read, "And so it is written, The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening spirit." That is Jesus Christ. The Bible calls Jesus Christ the second man, and He is also called the last Adam. "Howbeit that was not first which is

Christ as the Second Man and Last Adam

“The first man is of the earth, earthy: the second man is the Lord from heaven. As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy: and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly. And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly.”

Notice in verse 47: “The first man is of the earth, earthy.” That is Adam. “The second man is the Lord from heaven.” How can Jesus Christ be referred to as the second man when He existed from all eternity? He is God. Why would He not be called the first man? He is called the second man because He was the second man chronologically in time and in history, and to bear a federal headship and relationship with the people. Adam was the first one. By federal headship and federal representation, I simply mean that Adam was our head.

We were in him. Whatever he did, we did. In Romans 5:12, the Word of God says: “Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.” The interesting thing is that, in the Greek, it is an aorist passive, which means it is something that happened one time, once and for all, and is over with. When did all men sin one time, once and for all? In Adam, in our original sin. What Adam did, we did.

Some say, “If I had been in the garden, I wouldn’t have done that.” The truth is, if you had been in that garden, you would have done exactly the same thing that Adam did, because he was our head and our representative.

Jesus Christ is the second man to sustain a federal headship to a people. In Romans 5:17–19, we see a contrast between Adam and Christ, and between what Adam did and what Christ did. The first man Adam sinned and fell, dragging his people into sin, captivity, and depravity. The second Adam, or the last Adam—the second man—succeeded. He did what the first Adam failed to do.

Romans 5:17 says, “For if by one man's offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ.” That is Adam, and there is a comparison between the work of Christ and the work of Adam.

Verse 18 says, “Therefore as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life.” That is Adam; that is Jesus. Verse 19 says, “For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous.” That is Adam; that is Jesus Christ.

There is a contrast between the sin and failure of Adam and the obedience of Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is called in 1 Corinthians 15 the second man because He was the second in time in history to sustain a federal relationship and headship with the people. He is called the last Adam because no one else will ever hold federal headship and representation with the people. Therefore, either you

are saved by Jesus Christ, or you will never be saved. There will be no other Savior and no other plan.

There is not going to be any other salvation. You will either be saved by Jesus Christ or not be saved, because He is indeed the last Adam. There is not going to be another.

First Corinthians 1:30 says, "But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption: that, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord." So God the Father has made Jesus Christ unto us our wisdom, our righteousness, our sanctification, and our redemption. As Christians, we always rejoice in the righteousness of Jesus Christ, acknowledge Him to be our Head and the source of every blessing. We have no righteousness of our own. Our works cannot save us. Our imperfect obedience cannot save us. Jesus Christ, and Jesus Christ alone, must save us.

There are some people who think they are pretty good. Years ago, I was witnessing to a man who was a truck driver. When I told him he was a sinner, he became incensed and angry. He said, "I'm not going to tell you I'm as good as Jesus Christ is, but I'll come pretty close to Him." When he said that, I stepped back. He asked, "What are you stepping back for?" I said, "I don't want to be near when the lightning strikes."

But let me show you. The apostle Paul said, if you want to compare yourself with someone, try comparing yourself with me. Consider what Paul thought of himself as a Pharisee. He said, "For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh."

Then he said, "Though I might also have confidence in the flesh. If any other man thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more." Why? "Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee; concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless"—that is, according to his Pharisaical understanding. "But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ."

"Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith." So Paul said, if you want to think that you've got somewhat to boast in, compare yourself with me. He had all of this, but when he saw the righteousness of Jesus Christ, he counted everything he had as nothing but dung—totally, absolutely filthy and worthless.

Earlier I made the statement that where there is no law, there is no salvation. I want to show you why. We've already read about the righteousness of Jesus Christ, and in Romans 5 we read where one man was obedient to righteousness. Think about this question: suppose that all Jesus Christ did for us—the only thing He did—was die in order that we might be forgiven. That's it. Would forgiveness alone be sufficient to get us into the presence of God, into heaven, into the kingdom? The answer is no.

How can I say that? If you have forgiveness, it might keep you out of judgment, but it would not necessarily get you into the presence of God. In order to stand in God's presence, you must have an absolute righteousness. You have to be made righteous. It is not just that you need to be forgiven; you need a perfect righteousness.

The Bible says, “But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law.” Why? So that He might render to the law that which the law demanded, and work out an absolutely perfect righteousness. Jesus Christ fulfilled the law in every detail.

Isaiah 42:21 says concerning the Messiah, “The Lord is well pleased for his righteousness' sake; he will magnify the law, and make it honourable.” Jesus Christ magnified the law and made it honorable. Everyone else despised God's law, transgressed God's law, and broke God's law. Jesus Christ magnified God's law and made it honorable by rendering to God's law that personal, perfect, and perpetual obedience that the law demanded. In His obedience to the law, Jesus Christ worked out a perfect righteousness. That is why the Bible says in 1 Corinthians 1:30 that He has been made unto us

righteousness. He earned it, worked it out, and merited it by His obedience to the law.

Christ's Obedience Magnified the Law

How do we get that righteousness? Second Corinthians 5:21 says, “For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.” God the Father made Jesus Christ to be sin for us, though He knew no sin, so that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.

Imputation of Christ's Righteousness

This passage speaks of the doctrine of imputation. The Bible clearly tells us that our sin was imputed to Jesus Christ and His righteousness was imputed to us.

Many people try to make imputation very difficult, but it is very simple. Suppose Alice goes down to a store with which we have done business for years. She wants a new dress, sees the perfect dress, and finds that there is only one in her size. She picks it up and goes to the counter to pay for it, but realizes that she does not have enough money.

“Charge it.” That is what imputation is: to charge to one’s account, literally. There are only three instances of imputation in the Bible. First, there is the imputation of Adam’s sin to his posterity. Second, there is the imputation of the believer’s sins to Jesus Christ. Third, there is the imputation of the righteousness of Jesus Christ to believers.

Let us suppose this pen represents the righteousness of Jesus Christ, and this cell phone represents the sins of believers. God took those sins and charged them to the account of Jesus Christ. Now He is our sacrifice, our substitute, and our surety. He took that perfect obedience which Jesus Christ worked out and imputes it to our account. He charges us as being righteous when we have not been obedient. Jesus Christ has been obedient, and He fulfilled the law exactly the way God demanded it. That is why Jesus Christ said in John 8:29, “He that sent me is with me: the Father hath not left me alone; for I do always those things that please him.”

Romans 3:24 says, “Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; to declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus. Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? of works? Nay: but by the law of faith. Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law.” Verse 25 says, “Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation.” God set Jesus Christ forth to be a propitiation.

The word propitiation is from the Greek word hilasmos, and it literally means to appease, to placate, to satisfy. God the Father set forth His Son Jesus Christ that He might satisfy God. God was righteously angry with us because of our sin, whose penalty is death. But we also violated His law, dishonored His law, and failed to magnify His law. Jesus Christ came and gave perfect obedience to that law, thus working a righteousness, and also died as our sacrifice and substitute. Thus He satisfied the justice and holiness of God at the same time. Jesus Christ is our righteousness, but He got that righteousness by working obedience to God's law. This is why Romans 10:4 says, "For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth."

That does not mean that I do not want to obey God or keep His law. I certainly do. But I am not trusting in any of my obedience, any good deed that I have done, or any work that I do, because Jesus Christ is my righteousness. I now have an absolute, perfect righteousness in Jesus Christ. I not only have forgiveness; I have righteousness. I will not stand condemned, but will also be ushered into God's presence.

You remember the passage, I think in Matthew 22, where he sent his servants out to invite men into the wedding. When the host came out, he saw one without a wedding garment and said, "Friend, how camest thou in hither not having a wedding garment?" And he was speechless. Then the host said, "Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." That wedding garment is the robe of

righteousness which Jesus Christ has given unto us. We have a perfect righteousness in Jesus Christ.

His obedience to the law did not negate, abrogate, set aside, or nullify it. According to the scripture, His obedience magnified the law and made it honorable. God's law demanded absolute perfection. When Jesus Christ, His only begotten Son, was made under that law, He did not lower His standard one iota. He had to fulfill that same standard that God placed everyone under. Our salvation and righteousness do indeed depend upon the law, yet not upon our law-keeping. They depend upon the law-keeping of the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ kept the law, and His obedience is now our righteousness.

He is the second man. He is the last Adam. That which He did for His people is now imputed unto us. Have you ever stopped to think about this? Scripture teaches us that we were crucified with Christ, died with Christ, buried with Christ, risen from the dead in Christ, ascended into heaven in Christ, and are now seated in heavenly places in Jesus Christ.

Ephesians 2:4–7 says: “But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: that in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus.” It is the mercy of God that has raised us up, seated us in heavenly places in Jesus Christ, and given us His righteousness.

Applications: Obey the Law and Rest in Christ's Righteousness

Here are two quick applications. First, if our Lord’s obedience honored and magnified His law, should we try to nullify it, abrogate it, set it aside, denounce it, deny it, and disobey it? He demonstrated that God’s law is a perfect standard for obedience. If His law is the perfect standard for obedience, how can we unhitch from the Old Testament, deny God’s law, or disobey it? The Lord Jesus Christ did not nullify His law. It is still our standard, and God expects us to obey because His law is His revealed will for His people. If Jesus

Christ made it honorable and magnified it, we should endeavor to obey. That is for sure.

The second application is this: there is a hymn, “My Faith Has Found a Resting Place.” “My faith has found a resting place, not in device nor creed; I trust the ever-living One, His wounds for me shall plead.” In other words, the person and work of Jesus Christ is all we need in salvation. Why?

In Him we have forgiveness, righteousness, and perfect salvation. He is our righteousness and salvation. The first answer as to why there is no salvation apart from the law is that it was necessary to earn and work out the perfect righteousness which Jesus Christ earned and worked out for His people. Without it, we would have no righteousness, and without righteousness, no salvation.

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we bow to You. We thank You for Your word, truth, and the righteousness of Jesus Christ. It is not by works of righteousness which we have done, but by Your grace and mercy that You have saved us through the person and work of Jesus Christ. We give the honor and praise in His name. Amen.

CHAPTER 4

Promises Of The Law

Part Four

Introduction and Review

This is the fourth message on the promises of the law. First Kings 8:56 was the text with which I began: “Blessed be the Lord that hath given rest unto his people Israel according to all that he promised. There has not failed one word of all his good promise, which he promised by the hand of Moses his servant.” Thus I am dealing with the promises of the law. In Hebrews, the Bible says that the New Covenant was based upon better promises, indicating that there were promises in the Old Covenant, but those in the New Testament are better.

I have tried to demonstrate that the New Testament is concealed in the Old Testament, and the Old Testament is revealed in the New Testament, and that there is continuity between the Testaments. You cannot unhitch from the Old Testament. You cannot deny, denigrate, or try to destroy the Old Testament without doing the same to the New Testament. Our Lord quoted from twenty-four Old Testament books. There are 855 direct quotes from the Old Testament in the

New Testament, counting 439 allusions and nearly 150 possible allusions. Very obviously, you cannot destroy one Testament without destroying them all.

Neither can you do away with the law. It tells us what is right and what is wrong; it distinguishes what is good from what is evil. God's righteousness is revealed in His law.

In the second message, I pointed out that we cannot even know what sin is apart from the law. Romans 3:20 says that by the deeds of the law no flesh shall be justified, for by the law is the knowledge of sin. Then 1 John 3:4 says, “Whosoever transgresseth the law also committed sin, for sin is the transgression of the law.” Without the law, we do not know what sin is.

In the third message, I pointed out that without the law there is no salvation—not that the law saves us, or that it helps to save us, but if you do away with the law, you do away with salvation.

What if Jesus Christ only died to give us forgiveness of sins, and that was all? Would that be sufficient to get us into the presence of God? The answer is no. Being forgiven for your sins might keep you out of judgment, but it would not necessarily get you into God's presence. In order to enter God's presence, you need not only forgiveness of sins, but also an absolute, perfect righteousness.

The Bible tells us that Jesus Christ was made of a woman and made under the law, to redeem those that were under the law. He was made under the law so that He might render to that law what the law demands. Jesus Christ therefore worked out an absolute, perfect righteousness. He died and sacrificed Himself to give us forgiveness and pay for our sins, but He also obeyed God's law in order to work out a perfect righteousness. According to 2 Corinthians 5:21, that righteousness is imputed to us. Our sins were imputed to Him, and His righteousness is imputed to us.

The Law as Schoolmaster

What if there is no law? What if the law has been done away with? If the law has been done away with, there is no salvation, because one function of the law is that God ordained it to be a schoolmaster to bring us to Christ. The Apostle says in Galatians 3:24, “Wherefore

the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith."

What enters your mind when I use the word schoolmaster? I hope it is not the idea of a modern-day schoolteacher. I do not believe modern-day schoolteachers have any relation to what we would call a schoolmaster. A real old-fashioned schoolmaster was absolutely, totally different, especially in today's politically correct environment. With the rebellious attitude of students toward any and all authority, it is a wonder that anyone can communicate anything in any classroom today. When you read the news, you find that teachers are being shot, stabbed, assaulted, and beaten up by their students.

One teacher here in Florida was recently fired for giving a student a zero for not doing his homework. I do not know how else she could have addressed that situation, but she was fired for giving him a zero. I would never teach in a government school under any circumstances. You can call it a public school if you like, but it is still a government school. I certainly would not teach under the circumstances teachers face today.

Where there is no discipline, there is no education. Where there is no respect for authority, there is no education. It is impossible to teach anyone who will not listen, behave, respect, or submit to authority. When you look around you, truthfully, modern-day teachers are nothing more than high-priced babysitters when they are not defending themselves from their own students.

When I think of a schoolmaster, I think of the old-timey schoolmasters, especially when school was held in a one-room schoolhouse. All grades, from kindergarten or first grade through the twelfth grade, were in one schoolhouse. Discipline and respect for authority were absolute necessities. There had to be respect not only for the teacher, but for the other students as well.

Our two oldest grandchildren were able to attend something similar to a one-room schoolhouse years ago. Alice and I had been teaching them phonics, and one of our friends opened a little Christian school down the road. She was teaching phonics as well as several other grades, and our two oldest grandchildren went there for a while. Renee, our oldest granddaughter, was talking about a

young man who was in the eleventh grade. He was a big, strapping, strong man. She said, "I think it's silly such an old boy like him is still in kindergarten."

She thought that because she was in kindergarten, he was in kindergarten as well, but that certainly was not true. When you think of those old schoolmasters, there was a chalkboard, and on top of it there was a rod. Usually, in one corner of the chalkboard, the law was written: lying, two lashes; cheating, three lashes; fighting, four lashes; stealing, five lashes. Whatever you were caught doing, that was the number of lashes you received.

Moreover, you were brought up in front of the class, whipped, and disciplined in front of everyone. When I was a boy, if you got a whipping in school, there was another one waiting for you when you got home. Here was a schoolmaster who actually taught because he had the authority to discipline and demand respect.

Our term “schoolmaster” comes from the Greek word “paidagogos,” translated in our Bibles as “schoolmaster” or “instructor,” and from which we get our English word “pedagogue.” In Greek and Roman times, the pedagogue was a guardian and guide for boys. The name was applied to trustworthy slaves and free men charged with supervising the life and morals of boys belonging to what we would call the better class. The boys were not even allowed to leave their houses without their pedagogue. He was responsible for them until they reached manhood. They were instructed in civility, morality, and ethics.

The Bible tells us in verse 24 that the law was our schoolmaster to bring us to Christ. The law has to be used lawfully. First Timothy chapter 1, beginning with verse 8, says: “But we know that the law is good, if a man use it lawfully.” So many use the law unlawfully. They try to be justified by it and saved by their works. That is an unlawful use of the law, because the law was never meant to save.

The Lawful Use of the Law

“We know that the law is good if a man use it lawfully, knowing this: That the law was not made for a righteous man.” Why? We will get into that later. “But for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly

and for sinners, for unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers, for whoremongers, for them that defile themselves with mankind, for men-stealers, for liars, for perjured persons, if there be any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine, according to the glorious gospel of the blessed God, which was committed to my trust."

When you look at this passage, the law is intended for the wicked in the sense that it was meant to restrain. It not only restrained; it declared the penalty for anyone who violated its demands.

Obviously, in this sense the law was not made for the righteous man, because the righteous man is going to do that which is right anyhow. But Paul states that the law is good if we use it lawfully. The problem is that so many use it unlawfully; they seek it as a means of justification, although it was never given for justification. The law not only restrains; it also declares the penalty for violation.

For example, God demands the death penalty for murder. In Numbers 35:31, God says, "Moreover, you shall take no satisfaction for the life of a murderer who is guilty of death, for he shall surely be put to death." The murderer could not make restitution, bribe his way out, or pay his way out of the death sentence. If he was a murderer, God said he was to be put to death.

If men today knew absolutely for certain that if they murdered they would be put to death, they would think twice about committing murder. In today's politically correct climate and under our wimpy judicial system, a man can commit murder and be out in seven years, five years, or anything like that. Unless, of course, you murder a cop or a politician; then you get the death penalty. Certain lives are more valuable than other lives, according to the politically correct crowd today.

But the Bible says in Ecclesiastes 8:11, "Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the hearts of the sons of men in them are fully set to do evil." If someone who murdered were taken out as quickly as he was found guilty and executed, it would change things. Instead, someone may sit on death row for five, ten, fifteen, or twenty years, supported by the taxpayers. Someone says, "I don't think the death penalty will restrain anyone. I

don't think it's a deterrent." It will certainly deter and restrain the one who is executed. He will never commit any more murders.

The Bible tells us that the law is our schoolmaster. If it is a schoolmaster, then it must instruct us, teach us, and give us direction. We have to ask: when we understand that the law does not justify, what does it do? It brings us to Jesus Christ, who justifies the ungodly.

The Law Reveals Sin

First Lesson: We Are Sinners

How does the law do that? What does it teach us? I want to give you four things the law teaches us. First, the law teaches us that we are sinners. The law is God's standard for righteousness. When we violate that law, we transgress, we sin, and we are under its curse.

The Bible says, "For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). We have sinned in two ways. First, Adam's sin was imputed to us; we possess what is known as original sin. When he sinned, we sinned; when he fell, we fell. Adam gave his posterity a sinful disposition and a nature that is absolutely, totally depraved.

Secondly, from original sin, we fall into what is known as actual sin. Everyone is guilty not only of original sin but has actually sinned. We have violated the law, and we sin because we are sinners. We possess a sinful nature and therefore easily, willingly, and readily sin.

John Trapp, the old Puritan, said it like this: "The first man"—he is talking about Adam—"the first man defiled the nature, and ever since the nature defiles the man. Adam was a parent, a public person, a Parliament man as it were; the whole country of mankind was in him and fell in him." And that is true. "For all have sinned and come short of God's glory." To come short of God's glory means that we are deficient and lacking in it. We have not reached God's glory and cannot obtain it of ourselves. God's glory is not merely His praise, but His approbation—His recognition and blessing upon us. None of our works can approve us unto Him.

He cannot reach down and say, "I approve of everything that you're doing. You're just perfect. You're just good." We have fallen short of that approbation, and therefore we are under His condemnation. Here is the problem: many people are willing to admit and confess that they are sinners, and sometimes even boast in their sin. They laugh and joke about their sins and tell of their episodes with a little twinkle in their eye. That means sin is not serious to them at all; they have never recognized its reality.

Ecclesiastes 7:6 says, "For as the crackling of thorns under a pot, so is the laughter of a fool. It is vanity." Proverbs 14:9 says, "Fools make a mock at sin." They laugh at it; it means nothing.

Only those who have been truly convicted by the Holy Spirit of God are willing to admit that they are sinful, wicked, depraved, and worthless in themselves. Only the Holy Spirit brings a man to say, as the prodigal son said in Luke 15:21, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and in thy sight, and I am no more worthy to be called thy son." When the Holy Spirit shows us the practical application of the law, we understand how deeply we have sinned and revolted against God.

Sin is no light thing. It defiles our entire being and destroys everything that we touch. That is why Isaiah 64:6 says, “But we are all as an unclean thing, and all of our righteousnesses are as filthy rags, and we all do fade as a leaf, and our iniquities like the wind have taken hold upon us.” The very first thing the law of God teaches us is that we are sinners. We have sinned against a holy, righteous God.

Second Lesson: We Cannot Save Ourselves

There is a second thing the law teaches us: we cannot save ourselves. How does the law teach us that? The law demands three things from every individual: personal obedience, perfect obedience, and perpetual obedience. None of us have rendered that to the law; therefore, we are under its curse. As the Bible says, “For as many as are of the works of the law are under its curse, because cursed is the man that continueth not therein.” James 2:10–11 tells us that if we violate the law on one point, then we are guilty of all. How, then, can we render to God the glory due unto His name when we have failed

on all three accounts? We have not given the law personal obedience, perfect obedience, or perpetual obedience.

Some individuals think they have kept the law. Romans 7:9 says, “For I was alive once without the law, but when the law came, or the commandment came, sin revived and I died.” Paul actually thought at one time that he was perfect, because he said he was, “touching the law blameless.” Matthew Poole, paraphrasing Paul's attitude in Romans 7:9, wrote: “Before I knew the law was right and understood the divine and spiritual meaning of it, or while the law stood afar off and was not brought home to my conscience, I was alive.”

That is, in my own conceit, I thought myself as good a condition as any man living. My conscience never gave me any trouble. So it was with me once, when I was a Pharisee or in an unregenerate state. But when God opened his eyes and he saw his sin the way God saw it, then he said, “Sin revived and I died.” In other words, I am under the curse and penalty of the law.

In Mark chapter 10, verse 17, we find an illustration of a Pharisaical attitude and see exactly how our Lord deals with it: “And when he was going forth into the way, there came one running, and kneeled to him, and asked him, Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life? And Jesus said unto him, Why callest thou me good? There is none good but one, that is God.” In other words, if I am good, then I am God. And if I am God, you do not come running into My presence demanding.

The man asks again, “What shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?” Our Lord answered, “Thou knowest the commandments, Do not commit adultery, Do not kill, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Defraud not, Honor thy father and thy mother.” He answered, “Master, all these have I observed from my youth.” Then Jesus, beholding him, loved him and said unto him, “One thing thou lackest: go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven, and come, take up the cross, and follow me.”

He was sad at that saying, and went away grieved. Why? For he had great possessions. Jesus looked round about and saith unto his disciples, “How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the

kingdom of God.” The disciples were astonished at His words. But Jesus answered again, “Children, how hard is it for them that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God? It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God.” They were astonished out of measure, saying among themselves, “Who then can be saved?” Jesus, looking upon them, said, “With men it is impossible, but not with God. For with God, all things are possible.”

This rich young ruler came running to Jesus, knelt, and asked Him, "Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?" He wanted to do something in order to be saved. So our Lord said, If you want to do something, keep the law. He named some of the law: Do not commit adultery, do not kill, do not steal, do not bear false witness, defraud not, honor thy father and thy mother. The young man answered, "Master, all these have I observed from my youth."

Our Lord said there was just one thing that he lacked if he really wanted to be saved. He said, "Go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven. And come, take up the cross, and follow me."

So here is my question: Is selling everything that you have and giving to the poor a requirement to be saved? The answer is no. Why? Did Jesus Christ tell this young man that was what he lacked? Let me explain it like this.

In verse 19, our Lord simply quoted the law: Do not commit adultery. Do not steal. Do not defraud. Honor your father and your mother. And what did the young man say? "All these have I observed from my youth." He thought he had kept these things. Our Lord said, All right. Now He was not going to quote the law; He was going to make an application. The young man thought he had done all of those things.

He was told to sell everything that he had and give to the poor. The young man went away sad because he had great possessions. Here was the man who thought he had kept God's law from his youth up. But our Lord showed him that he had not even kept the first commandment, "Thou shalt have no other gods before me," for his money was his god. He would rather have his money than salvation.

That was the god that he worshipped. Our Lord was applying the law. There is a difference between quoting the law and applying the law. Quoting did not affect this young man, but applying it to his riches revealed what he really was, whom he really worshipped, and what he genuinely wanted: that we are sinners.

Number two, the law teaches us that we cannot save ourselves. Number three, the law teaches us that there is a vast chasm between an infinitely holy God and a wicked, vile sinner. The chasm is a result of the absolute holiness of God and the absolute wickedness and depravity of man. God is infinitely holy. There is no impurity, uncleanness, or defilement in Him.

Third Lesson: The Chasm Between God and Sinners

In Revelation chapter 15 and verse 5 we read this: "Who shall not fear Thee, O Lord, and glorify Thy Name? For only Thou art holy." He is the Holy One. Scripture says that we are to give thanks at the remembrance of His holiness. God is holy.

Stephen Charnock said concerning God's holiness: "He only is independently, infinitely, immutably holy. In Scripture He is frequently styled the Holy One." He is so called because the sum of all moral excellency is found in Him. He is absolute purity, unsullied by the shadow of sin. God is light, and in Him no darkness at all. Holiness is the very excellency of the divine nature. The great God is glorious in holiness. Therefore do we read, "Thou art of pure eyes, and behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity," that is, you cannot look condoningly or approvingly upon it. As God's power is the opposite of the native weakness of the creature, and His wisdom is in complete contrast from the least effect of understanding or folly, so His holiness is the very antithesis of all moral blemish or defilement. Of old, God appointed singers in Israel that should praise the beauty of holiness. "Power is God's arm, omniscience is God's eye, but holiness is God's beauty." Holiness is God's beauty. He is the Holy God.

Arthur W. Pink writes: "Because God is holy, He hates all sin. He loves everything which is in conformity to His law, and loathes everything which is contrary to it. His word plainly declares the froward is an abomination to the Lord, and again the thoughts of the

wicked are an abomination to the Lord. It follows, therefore, that He must necessarily punish sin. Sin can no more exist without demanding His punishment than without requiring His hatred of it."

God has often forgiven sinners, but He never forgives sin. Sin has to be paid for, and the only way God forgives sinners is because our sins were paid for by the person and work of Jesus Christ. The sinner is only forgiven on the ground of another having borne the punishment for his sins.

For without the shedding of blood there is no remission. Therefore, we are told, the Lord will take vengeance on His adversaries, and He reserveth wrath for His enemies. For one sin, God banished our first parents from Eden. For one sin, all the posterity of Canaan, a son of Ham, fell under a curse which remains over them to this day. For one sin, Moses was excluded from Canaan. For one sin, Elisha's servant was smitten with leprosy. For one sin, Ananias and Sapphira were cut off out of the land of the living. Because God is holy, acceptance with Him on the ground of creature doings is utterly impossible. A fallen creature could sooner create a world than produce that which would meet the approval of infinite purity.

Can darkness dwell with the light? Can the Immaculate One take pleasure in filthy rags? The best that sinful man can bring forth is defiled. A corrupt tree cannot bear good fruit. God would deny Himself and vilify His perfections were He to account as righteous and holy that which is not so in itself. Nothing is so which has the least stain upon it, contrary to the nature of God.

One reason that you and I take sin so lightly is because we have never really grasped the holiness of God. Once you understand that God is infinitely holy, then you will understand how man is so desperately wicked. Look in your Bibles to Isaiah chapter 6. In the year that King Uzziah died, Isaiah saw the Lord. Isaiah 6, beginning with verse 1: "In the year that King Uzziah died I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple."

Surrounding the throne above were the seraphims. Each one had six wings: with twain he covered his face, with twain he covered his

feet, and with twain he did fly. One cried unto another and said, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts. The whole earth is full of his glory." The post of the door moved at the voice of him that cried, and the house was filled with smoke.

Then said I, "Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts." Then flew one of the seraphims unto me, having a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with the tongs from off the altar, and he laid it upon my mouth and said, "Lo, this has touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged."

Isaiah saw God high and lifted up in a vision. He saw the seraphim singing, "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of hosts." When he had gotten a glimpse of God's holiness, the first thing he said was, "Woe is me, for I'm a man of unclean lips. And I dwell in the midst of people of uncleanness, for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts." If you would like to see how wide and vast this great chasm is between a holy God and a wickedly depraved sinner, I'm gonna tell you how you can get a glimpse

You need to learn to pray three things. The very first thing that you need to learn to pray is this: “Lord, show me Thyself. Show me how holy, righteous, pure Thou art.” Secondly, you pray, “Lord, show me myself. Let me see what I am.” When you begin to see God’s holiness, and you begin to see your depravity, and your wickedness, and your filthiness, and your impurity—and by the way, I don’t care how saved you are—the truth of the matter is that even our prayer is filled with sin. We are selfish. We want our will instead of God’s will. Our minds oftentimes, while we pray, are filled with unclean thoughts. The very best saint of God is stained with sin.

“Lord, show me Thyself. Lord, show me myself.” And when you are thoroughly dejected with seeing how wicked, vile, depraved, and hideous you really are in and of yourself, and how vile your flesh really is, then the third thing you need to pray is, “Lord, show me the Lord Jesus Christ and His perfect sacrifice and atonement and righteousness and how He alone can take care of all my needs.”

Fourth Lesson: We Need a Mediator

If you ever see who God is and if you ever see who you are, you'll understand this wide chasm. That will make you cry out for the answer. The law, as our schoolmaster, teaches us not only that we're sinners and that we cannot save ourselves; it also teaches us there is a vast chasm between a holy God and a wicked sinner. If we ever reach that holy God, it must be through the merits of another. It must be through a mediator.

We have no standing in, and no right to approach God in and of ourselves. We're rebels. We've transgressed His law, trampled His commands under our feet, refused to obey Him, despised His grace and mercy, and rejected His overtures of peace and reconciliation. On what ground could we ever approach Him in and of ourselves? The truth is, if we ever get to Him, it must be through a mediator.

Job said in Job 9:33, "Neither is there a daysman betwixt us that might lay his hand upon us both." A daysman is a mediator. Job was yearning for a mediator to go between God and himself. He realized he could not get there; he needed a mediator.

The Lord Jesus Christ came as our daysman and mediator. The only way we could ever reach God was through a mediator, and God Himself sent His only begotten Son to be that mediator. Had He not wanted us, He would never have sent His Son. But He sent His Son. As the Bible says, "But when the fullness of time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them from under the law." Hebrews chapter 2 says that He took not upon Himself the nature of angels but the seed of Abraham. Why? That He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver us.

He came as our Mediator. He is perfect God and perfect man. He is the God-man. First Timothy 3:16 says, "And without controversy, great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, and received up into glory." Thus He is perfect God and perfect man, and He is able to lay His hands upon each of us.

He lays His hand upon the Father and His hand upon His brethren. That is why the Bible says in 1 Timothy 2:5–6, “For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time.” There is one God and one mediator—not two, not three. One. It is not Mary or the saints; it is Jesus Christ, who gave Himself as a ransom for sinful, wicked transgressors. We can come to God only through the merits of another. Only He can bridge the chasm that separated a holy God from wicked, vile sinners. No one can reach the Father except through Jesus Christ.

He said in John 14 and verse 6, "I am the way, the truth, and the life, and no man cometh unto the Father but by me." There are no exceptions. There is no other way that anyone can reach a holy God except through the Lord Jesus Christ.

Conclusion: The Law Drives Us to Christ

The law is our schoolmaster. The law teaches us that we are sinners, that we cannot save ourselves, that there is a vast chasm between a holy God and a wicked sinner, and that we must be brought to God through a mediator. Wherefore the law is our schoolmaster to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith. The law tells us these things and says, if you do not get to Jesus Christ, the curse will fall upon you. The penalty will be exacted from you, and you will die, not just physically but eternally.

Matthew Poole wrote, "So that God's end in giving us the law was that we might be fitted for Christ and obtain justification by believing in him." We cannot be justified by the law. We can try, but we will fail because we cannot give to the law that which it demands. John Calvin wrote: "But a question arises: What was the instruction or education of the schoolmaster? First, the Law, by displaying the justice of God, convinced them that in themselves they were unrighteous, for in the commandment of God, as in a mirror, they might see how far they were distant from true righteousness."

They were thus reminded that righteousness must be sought in some other quarter. The promises of the Law serve the same purpose. If you cannot obtain life by works but by fulfilling the law, some new and different method must be sought. Your weakness will

never allow you to ascend so high; nay, though you desire and strive ever so much, you will always fall short of the object.

The threatenings, on the other hand, pressed and entreated them to seek refuge from the wrath and curse of God, and gave them no rest till they were constrained to seek the grace of Christ. That is what the law is for. It is to educate us and push us to Jesus Christ. It teaches us that if we do not get out from under it as a standard for justification, we will die. It teaches us that we must come to Christ. Matthew Poole said, "The ceremonial law showed us Christ in all His types and sacrifices. The moral law showed us the absolute need of a mediator."

It showed us sin, accused and condemned us for it, and showed us no help either for the guilt of sin, contracted, or against the power of it. The judicial law showed us the exact requirements of God, His divine justice, and His penalty for sinning against Him. In the ceremonial law, we seek by animal sacrifices to answer for having done it, but find dead victims no satisfaction for the sins of living men, and that our purifying will not cleanse the soul. Therefore we need an infinitely better sacrifice, the antitype of all legal sacrifices. Thus delivered up the judicial law we see how awful is the doom we deserve. Thus the law at least leads us to Christ, with whom we must find righteousness and peace.

When Paul said the law is our schoolmaster to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith, the law teaches us, condemns us, and warns us to come to Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ obeyed the Law personally, perfectly, and perpetually. Therefore, we have in Him a righteousness that He worked out by obedience.

The Law gives us the knowledge of sin. It restrains us by teaching us its penalty. It reveals the will of God for our lives and gives us direction. It is a schoolmaster to bring us to Christ. When anyone tries to negate, abrogate, nullify, or set aside the Law of God, he is setting aside salvation, because part and parcel of salvation is the obedience of Jesus Christ to the law. One proper function and use of the law is to instruct us, chastise us, and drive us to the One who can truly justify us and save us by grace through faith. When you nullify the law, you nullify salvation.

Father, we ask in the name of Jesus Christ that You would help us, teach us, build us up in the most holy faith, and show us the proper use of the law. Help us, Lord, to love Thee and live for Thee.

In the name of Jesus Christ, we ask and pray. Amen. Lord willing.

CHAPTER 5

Promises Of The Law

Part Five

Introduction and Scripture Reading

In 1 Kings chapter 8 and verse 56, the Word of God says, Solomon is praying, "Blessed be the Lord that hath given rest unto his people Israel, according to all that he promised. There did not fail one word of all his good promise, which he promised by the hand of Moses his servant."

This is where we get the title, "The Promises of the Law." Today we are on the fifth message in the series. In 1 Thessalonians chapter 4, Paul writes, "Furthermore then we beseech you, brethren, and exhort you by the Lord Jesus, that as you have received of us how you ought to walk and to please God, so you would abound more and more. For you know what commandments we gave you by the Lord Jesus. For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that you should abstain from fornication: that every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honor."

Let me begin by reviewing just momentarily. I have pointed out that the law has not been abrogated. In the first several messages, I gave you four ways to explain every negative passage concerning the law in the New Testament when you consider it in its context.

Review: The Law Has Not Been Abrogated

There is absolutely no way that we can unhitch from the Old Testament, and there is certainly no way that we can unhitch from the law of God. As I pointed out in the second message, if you do away with the law of God, you have done away with the knowledge of sin. The Bible says in Romans 3 and verse 20, "For by the law is the knowledge of sin." And in 1 John 3 and verse 4, "For sin is the transgression of the law." You cannot sin without violating God's law. If you do away with the law, you do away with the knowledge of sin.

Secondly, if you do away with the law, you do away with salvation—not that the law saves us. I pointed out very clearly in Galatians chapter 4 that the Bible says, "But when the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law, that we might have redemption."

Jesus Christ came and was made under the law, obeying it by giving to the law that personal, perfect, and perpetual obedience. Jesus Christ earned a righteousness. If all that Jesus Christ did for you was forgive you of your sins, would that get you in the presence of God? The answer is no. It might keep you out of judgment, but in order to get in the presence of God, you need an absolute positive righteousness. That is what Jesus Christ did, and that is given to us according to 2 Corinthians 5 and verse 21 through imputation. His righteousness is imputed to us as our sins were imputed to Him.

Without the law there is no salvation, because Galatians 3 and verse 24 tells us that the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Jesus Christ. The law teaches us four things very clearly. Number one, it teaches us that we are sinners. Number two, it teaches us that we cannot save ourselves. Number three, it teaches us there is a vast chasm between a holy God and a wicked, depraved sinner. Number four, it teaches us that if we ever bridge that chasm and get to that

holy God, it must be through the merits of another; it must be through a mediator. Jesus Christ, of course, is that mediator.

The law teaches us these things and brings us to Jesus Christ. As John Trapp said, Moses can bring us to the border of Canaan land, but it is Joshua who must bring us in. Of course, Joshua—the word Joshua, Yeshua, Jesus, Savior—means that the law indeed brings us and points us to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Without the Law There Is No Sanctification

Without the law there is no sanctification. Are you holy? Are you sanctified? Are you righteous? If you answered yes, how do you know? If you answered no—that you are not holy, sanctified, or righteous—how do you know? Is there a standard by which we can know whether or not we are holy or unholy, righteous or unrighteous? If there is a standard for righteous living and holy living, where is it found?

The Apostle Paul prayed for the Colossians, in Colossians chapter 1 and verse 10, "that ye might walk worthy unto the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God." Note what he said: "that ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing." Obviously, then, there is a way that we can walk pleasing unto the Lord, and there are ways that we can walk displeasing unto Him as well. So the question is, How do we know that we are walking worthily and pleasing to the Lord? And how do we know whether or not we are walking unworthily and displeasing to the Lord?

The Law as the Standard for Pleasing God

We could give a very general answer and say that we have a standard, and that standard is the Word of God. Certainly that would be true. I would say all of the Word of God, because His Word is our objective standard. But I believe that we can narrow it down a little and say that our standard is the law of God, because His law is an expression of His will for us.

God says in Hosea 4:6, "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject

thee, that thou shalt be no priest to me: seeing thou hast forgotten the law of thy God, I will also forget thy children." Note what He said: "Seeing thou hast forgotten the law of thy God, I will also forget thy children."

This is an example of what is known as the Lex Talionis of Scripture. That is simply Latin for the law of retribution. The law of retribution, or the Lex Talionis, is where God makes the punishment fit the crime. Thus, in Hosea 4:6, He says, "Seeing thou hast forgotten the law of thy God, I will also forget thy children." What is God's law? God's law is an expression of His will for us.

God is telling us how to walk, how to live, what to do, and what not to do. What are our children? They are expressions of our will. We wanted them and had them. So God says, “My law is an expression of my will. Your children are an expression of your will. You forget my law; I forget your children.” And you wonder, What is wrong with our young people today in this country? The answer is that, as a whole, most people have forgotten the law of God, and God, in righteous judgment, has forgotten our children as well.

The point I want to emphasize is this: without the law, there is no sanctification. When we talk about sanctification, we must distinguish between positional sanctification and personal, practical sanctification. Our positional sanctification is because of the person and work of Jesus Christ, and it is the person and work of Jesus Christ alone. It is objective because it is outside of us; we had absolutely nothing to do with it. It was the work of God alone.

Positional vs. Practical Sanctification

Incidentally, sanctification, like creation, is ascribed to all three persons in the Godhead: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. First, it is ascribed to the Father in Jude 1:1: “Jude, the servant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James, to them that are sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ, and called.” Thus, sanctification is the work of God the Father.

Secondly, sanctification is also referred to as the work of God the Son, Jesus Christ. Hebrews 2:11 says, “For both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one: for which cause he is not

ashamed to call them brethren." He is the sanctifier, and we are the sanctified. Hebrews 10:10 says, "By the which will"—that is, the will of Jesus

Christ sanctifies us: "by the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all." Hebrews 10:14 adds, "For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified." Sanctification is therefore known as the work of God the Father, the work of God the Son, and the work of God the Holy Spirit.

The Apostle Paul said in Romans 15:16, "That I should be the minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, ministering the gospel of God, that the offering up of the Gentiles might be acceptable, being sanctified by the Holy Ghost." In 1 Corinthians 6:11, the Bible says, "And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God."

There is a third passage, 1 Peter 1:2. In this verse, the work of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit is mentioned: "Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace unto you, and peace, be multiplied." In that one verse, you have the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit all mentioned.

This is positional sanctification. It is the work of God alone. God the Father gave the Son, God the Son was obedient, and God the Spirit, of course, was sanctified, or sanctified all of His work. Whatever our Lord did, He did in the fullness of the Spirit. He has worked out this perfect positional sanctification for us.

Secondly, there is personal and practical sanctification. This is still the work of God, the Holy Spirit in us, whereby He leads and guides us to be obedient to God's Word, and especially to God's law.

It is an aspect of the ministry where we teach the Word of God in order that God's people might live a sanctified life. In John 17:19, in that high priestly prayer of Jesus Christ, He said, "And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth." So the truth is the means whereby we are sanctified. In Acts

20:32, Paul said, "And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified." It is the Word of His grace, the truth, that is able to build us up and give us an inheritance among those who are sanctified. Then Paul said in Acts 26:18, "To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me."

When you start talking about a personal and practical sanctification, it has to do with the truth, the ministry, and the Word of God. There has to be a standard for you and me to know whether or not we are holy or unholy. I want to give you a quote, and I hope to convince you otherwise. This quote was made by Andy Stanley. I do not know Andy Stanley. I do know he is the son of Charles Stanley of Atlanta, Georgia.

Love Defined by the Law

He has a rather large congregation. He is the man who said it is time to unhitch from the Old Testament. But he also says this. Here is an article out of Relevant Magazine, and Andy Stanley tells Christians that God's words from Mount Sinai do not apply to them anymore. Listen carefully to this quote: "Participants in the New Covenant, that's Christians, are not required to obey any of the commandments found in the first part of their Bibles. Participants in the New Covenant are expected to obey the single command Jesus issued as part of the New Covenant: as I have loved you, so you must love one another." Now, he just said we do not have to obey anything in the Old Testament. The only thing we have to do is obey love.

When you talk about love and your definition of love, as Bill Clinton famously stated years ago, it all depends on what your definition of "is" is. You and I are not allowed to give our own definitions of love. If I looked at Steve and said, "I love your wife," he would say, "What?" If I said, "I love your wife; I'd like her to be my wife," he would answer, "What you mean is you're coveting my wife, you're lusting after my wife." But I could insist, "No, I am saying I

love her; it's my definition." Really? So I could look at James and say, "Boy, I love your money."

He is laughing already, you see. But I could say, "I love your money." He says, "No, no, no. What you mean is you want to swindle me out of my money. You want to defraud me. You want to take my—" But I answer, "No, I just love your money. I'd like to have it." Or I could say, "I love Francis's new car. I'd love to have that new car." What does that mean? Francis will say, "What you're trying to tell me is you're going to sneak around and try to steal my car." "Oh no, I just love it. I just want to take it and use it for myself." You see how foolish it is to say, "All you've got to do is obey love."

Now, here is my question: Is there a definition of love in the Bible? The answer is yes. We are not left to decide for ourselves what is love and what is not love. I cannot put my definition upon that word. Romans 13:8 says, "Owe no man any thing, but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law." Verse 9 continues, "Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet; and if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." Then verse 10 says, "Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law." Now what is love? Love is the fulfilling of the law.

He just quoted in verse 9 the seventh, sixth, eighth, ninth, and tenth commandments. Of course, the first is involved as well, because you cannot violate any commandment without violating the first commandment.

So what is love? Jesus Christ requires us to love one another. Love is the fulfilling of the law. It is not an emotion or a feeling; it is obedience to God's law. First John 5:1-3 states, "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God: and every one that loveth him that begat loveth him also that is begotten of him. By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments."

We know that we love the children of God when we love God and keep his commandments. How do I know that I love Steve? Because

I honor him, his wife, and his relationship with her; I do not covet her or desire her. I honor her as his wife.

How do I know that I love James? I do not try to steal his money, cheat him, or defraud him. I act biblically toward him. How do I know that I am acting biblically toward Francis and a new car? I am not lusting after it, trying to steal it, or trying to get it from him. I am obeying and helping him protect that car.

Now watch verse 3. You want to know what love is? Here it is, black and white: "For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous." What is the love of God? The love of God is the fulfilling of the law of God. It is keeping God's commandments.

Where there is no law, there is no sanctification. If Jesus Christ had not kept the law of God perfectly, there would have been no positional sanctification. And if we do not keep God's law, there will be no personal or practical sanctification. Jesus Christ worked out a perfect righteousness for us by His obedience to the law of God. The Bible tells us in 1 Corinthians 1:30-31 that God has made Jesus Christ these things to us: “But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption: that, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.” Jesus Christ has made all these things unto us.

Sanctification Involves the Totality of Our Being

When we talk about sanctification, or being sanctified, we are talking about being holy. The Greek word is hagiasmos, which literally means to sanctify, to hallow, to make holy, to be separate, to set apart for God, and to be dedicated to God. Sanctification involves the totality of our being: our body, mind, emotions, and will. Everything that we are is involved in sanctification.

Paul prayed for the Thessalonians, “And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly,” that is, totally, completely, absolutely; “and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.” If God is to

sanctify us wholly, totally, and completely, then every aspect of our being is involved in sanctification.

As a reminder, if you nullify the law, then you have nullified sin, salvation, and sanctification as well, because sanctification is by the law. R. J. Rushdoony, in his Institutes of Biblical Law, said, “To separate the law from the gospel is to separate oneself from the law and the gospel and from Jesus Christ.”

“When God the Father regarded the law as so binding on man that the death of God's incarnate Son was necessary to redeem man, He could not regard that law as something now trifling, null and void for man. Man is saved that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in him” (Romans 8:4).

“To say that man is no longer under the law and yet obliged to avoid murder, adultery, theft, false witness, and other sins is to play with words. Either a law is a law and is binding, or it is no law and man is not bound but is free to admit those acts.” That is stating it very clearly. A law is either a law and binding, or it is not binding. If the law is not binding, what is wrong with adultery? What is wrong with fornication? What is wrong with theft? What is wrong with murder?

The problem is that we, like the Pharisees, want to limit God's law to that which is external. But if you look in your Bibles to Matthew chapter 5, you will see how our Lord makes an application and shows us the spirituality of the law. In verses 21 and 22, He is dealing with the sixth commandment. The way to understand Matthew chapter 5 is to see how our Lord is correcting the misinterpretations and misapplications of God's law by the Pharisees. The Pharisees always limited the law to that which is external.

He says, “Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time,” that is, the rabbis, those who claimed to be teachers, “Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment.” In other words, do not do this physically. Do not kill someone. Do not murder someone. That was their application: avoid the physical act.

But in verse 22 our Lord says, “But I say unto you,” in other words, here is the proper application of the law, “that whosoever is

angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment: and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca," that is, you worthless, stupid individual, "shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire." Our Lord is saying that murder is more than just a physical act. It involves the spirit, the disposition, and the attitude. It is not just physical; it is spiritual.

Remember what I have told you in time past: when God forbids any act, when God forbids any sin, at the same time He forbids any and everything that would lead up to that sin. So if I am sitting here thinking about murdering Ron, what am I doing? I have to be angry with him, bitter with him, and upset with him. I mean something.

In order not to kill him, I have to control my mind, my emotions, my disposition, and my feelings. Our Lord is saying that all this is involved in the Sixth Commandment.

Now, let me show you another one. In verses 27–28, He said, "Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery: But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart." Here our Lord is dealing with the Seventh Commandment. There is more to adultery than simply the physical act. There does not necessarily need to be a physical act; it can be in the heart, mental, or emotional. Our Lord has dealt with the Sixth and Seventh Commandments, and really and truly the Tenth Commandment as well, for the Tenth Commandment is, "Thou shalt not covet." You cannot commit the Seventh Commandment without violating the Tenth, because if you commit adultery, you have already coveted someone else's spouse. Obviously, our Lord is talking about sanctification. Sanctification includes every aspect of our being.

Let me put it plainly. There is more to sanctification than going to the church building once, twice, or three times a week and listening to a sermon. There is more to sanctification than reading a chapter out of your Bible every day. There is more to sanctification than praying every now and then, or even saying a daily prayer without really praying. We have not understood that sanctification involves the totality of our being.

1 Thessalonians 4: Sanctification and Obedience to God's Law

I want you to go back in your Bibles to 1 Thessalonians chapter 4, because sanctification is based upon obedience to God's law. These first eight verses deal with the personal and practical side of sanctification; they show us its essence. You must understand that there is responsibility and accountability on our part. In 1 Thessalonians 4:1, the Apostle writes, "Furthermore then we beseech you, brethren, and exhort you by the Lord Jesus, that as ye have received of us how ye ought to walk and to please God, so ye would abound more and more."

It is possible to walk and to please God. Paul said, “We taught you that. We told you how. You are to walk and to please God.” If you are walking and pleasing God, there is something else: you have to abound more and more. Your walk is to become more holy and more obedient. Paul said, “We’ve taught you this,” and exhorted you to walk and please God because he had taught you how to do this.

Holiness, or sanctification, and obedience are intimately connected. You cannot have one without the other. That is exactly what the Apostle Paul is saying. We have taught you; now you have to be obedient and walk pleasing to the Lord yourself. That is your responsibility. God is not going to fulfill our responsibilities for us. He is not going to walk for us, nor will He be holy for us. It is our responsibility to walk, please Him, and abound more and more.

Now look at verse 2. It emphasizes what the Apostle Paul taught these Thessalonians: “For ye know what commandments we gave you by the Lord Jesus.” The word commandments is plural. We did not merely tell you to love one another; we gave you commandments, because love is the fulfilling of the law.

Verse 3 says, “For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication.” If you want to know whether you are a believer and what the will of God for your life is, it is very plain: you should abstain from fornication. That is one aspect of the will of God. If you are sanctified, you are holy. A holy person is a sanctified person, and part and parcel of being holy and sanctified

is abstaining from fornication, because fornication is a violation of God's law. Fornication is a very broad word.

Many have wrongly stated that fornication is a sex act outside of marriage, while adultery is a sex act inside of marriage. Fornication, however, is an exceedingly broad word. The Greek word is porneia. In fact, we get an English word from two Greek words, porneia and graphe. Graphe, or graphics, simply means writing. Porneia and graphe give us pornography: fornication writing. Fornication is very broad.

It includes all illicit sexual intercourse of all kinds. It would include adultery, sodomy, lesbianism, bestiality, incest, and even the worship of idols. If you study the word fornication in the Old Testament, and often in the New Testament as well, it is usually connected with idolatry, the worship of idols.

Now see what verse 3 does: "For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication." Verse 3 sets the stage for violations of the 1st, 5th, 7th, 8th, and 10th Commandments. I included the 5th because all such activity is dishonoring to parents.

Matthew Poole stated it this way concerning fornication: "And by it is meant all unchasteness, either of persons married or unmarried, either in the heart or in the speech or in the eye or lascivious gesture as well as in the very act itself." This is the same thing our Lord said in Matthew chapter 7. It is more than simply a physical act.

"This is the will of God for you, that you abstain from fornication. It's the will of God that you be sanctified." Verse 4 continues: "For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication: that every one of you should know how to possess his vessel," that is, his body, "in sanctification and honour; not in the lust of concupiscence, even as the Gentiles which know not God."

You need to know how to possess your own vessel, your own body, in sanctification and honour. You are not to live in the lust of concupiscence—that is, the brazen, wicked desires and awfulness of those who are unsaved, who know not God. You are not to live like

them. You are to know how to possess your vessel, your body, in sanctification and honour.

We are not to be lusting, coveting, and desiring those things which God has forbidden, as the lost people do. No, we are to possess our vessel in sanctification and honor. We know what pleases Him. We know how to walk worthy. We know how to possess our vessels in sanctification and honor because He gave us His law.

In 1 Corinthians chapter 6, verses 15 through 20, the Apostle says, "Know ye not that your bodies are the members of Christ? Shall I then take the members of Christ, and make them the members of an harlot? God forbid." That is, perish the thought; do not even think about it. If your body is a member of Jesus Christ, shall you take that member and make it a member of an harlot? Should you commit fornication or adultery? God forbid.

"What? know ye not that he which is joined to an harlot is one body? for two, saith he, shall be one flesh. But he that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit." In other words, what we do in our body reflects upon Jesus Christ, for we are one spirit in Jesus Christ.

He goes on: "Flee fornication. Every sin that a man doeth is without the body; but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body." Then he asks, "What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's."

So our bodies do not belong to ourselves. When someone says, "Well it's my body, I'll do with it as I please," that is not true if he is a Christian. It is not even truly his body if he is not a Christian, for God created his body. It belongs to Him. The Apostle is talking about sanctification. He says, "For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication: that every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honour; not living like the ungodly."

No man is to "go beyond and defraud his brother in any matter," or in the matter, because he is talking about fornication, because "the Lord is the avenger of all such, as we also have forewarned you and testified."

Suppose that I endeavored to seduce a man's wife and succeeded. I have not only violated the first commandment, the fifth commandment, the seventh commandment, and the tenth commandment; I have also violated the eighth commandment because I have stolen that which does not belong to me.

If you defraud someone, you steal from them; you take that which is not yours. Thus he says that no man should go beyond and defraud his brother in the matter. This is the truth of James chapter 2: if you violate the law in one part, you are guilty of all. Here are commandments that you break by committing what most people would think is one sin.

It is far more than that. Note verse 7: “For God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness.” Holiness and sanctification are interchangeable; they are the same. If you are sanctified, you are holy; if you are holy, you are sanctified. This is the will of God, even your sanctification: that you should abstain from fornication, and that everyone know how to possess his vessel, his body, in sanctification and honor, not acting like the lost.

He says, “That no man go beyond and defraud his brother in the matter,” and warns that God is the avenger of all such. The reason is, “For God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness.” If God has called us unto holiness, how do we answer that calling? By obeying His law and bringing our lives into conformity with His law. God has not called us to uncleanness, but unto holiness.

Since we are talking about sanctification in 1 Thessalonians chapter 4, what is the alternative to sanctification? What is the alternative to holiness? What is the alternative to obedience to God's law? What happens when we refuse to obey God's law? After speaking of holiness, possessing your vessel in sanctification and honor, and abstaining from fornication, he says, “He therefore that despiseth, despiseth not man, but God, who hath also given unto us his holy Spirit.”

If we are not sanctified, if we are not abstaining from fornication, if we are not possessing our vessel in sanctification and honor, and if we are not walking in holiness, then we are despising God.

Consider David's adultery with Bathsheba. He not only violated the seventh commandment; he violated the sixth commandment, because he had Uriah the Hittite killed with the sword of the children of Ammon. He also violated the tenth commandment, the fifth commandment, and the first commandment. But notice what God says concerning David's act.

Nathan came and told David the story about the man who took the one little ewe lamb, killed it, and fed his visitor when he himself had plenty. David was greatly upset and said, "The man that hath done this thing shall surely die." Nathan then told him, "Wherefore hast thou despised the commandment of the Lord, to do evil in his sight? Thou hast killed Uriah the Hittite with the sword, and hast taken his wife to be thy wife," which was theft, "and hast slain him with the sword of the children of Ammon."

Then God said, "Now therefore the sword shall never depart from thine house; because thou hast despised me." In verse 9, David despised the commandment of the Lord. In verse 10, he despised God: he had taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be his wife. What does it mean that he despised God? In essence, David was saying, "I don't care what God says. I want her. I'm going to take her. I want her. I'm going to have her."

It was not only a despising of God's commandment; it was a despising of God Himself. In 1 Thessalonians 4, the word "despiseth" is atheteo in the Greek. It means to despise or reject, to disregard, to refuse, to treat lightly and contemptibly, and to bring to nothing. In other words, you count God as nothing and His Word as nothing. You actually despise God. You do to the Father what men did to the Son.

You remember that passage in Isaiah 53, verse 3, concerning Jesus Christ: “He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not.” What does that mean? He was despised, and we esteemed him not. We did not even think anything of Him. We did not think He deserved respect. It never bothered us or concerned us that the sinless Son of God was despised. Now what God is saying is, if you disobey My law, you are despising Me.

Here is what John Gill said concerning this despising God in verse 8: “Despiseth not man, not men only, the apostles of Christ and ministers of the gospel, for despising these exhortations they themselves were despised, though not alone, but God the Father, Son, and Spirit, God the Father, whose will was their sanctification, even to abstain from fornication and every act of uncleanness, which, if not attended to, was a despising of Him. And the Lord Jesus Christ, by whom and for whose sake they were entreated and exhorted, and whose name and by whose authority the apostles gave these commandments, wherefore to slight them was to slight Jesus Christ Himself.” This is a proof of the true and proper deity of Christ. Notice 1 Thessalonians 4:8: “He therefore that despiseth, despiseth not man, but God, who hath also given unto us his holy Spirit.” It would therefore be a despising not only of the Father and the Son, but of the Holy Spirit as well.

Applications and Conclusion

On this side of the coin, then, we have a personal and practical holiness, and that personal and practical holiness is found in obedience to God's law. Turn to 2 Timothy chapter 2 and look at verses 20–22: “But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and of silver, but also of wood and of earth; and some to honour, and some to dishonour. If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the master's use, and prepared unto every good work. And then he says, “Flee also youthful lusts: but follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart.” It is our duty, obligation, and responsibility to purge ourselves from all these dishonorable things in our house—that is, in our body.

Now, let me make a couple of applications and try to tie this together. First of all, sanctification is found in obedience to the law of God. Do not tell me that you know someone who is holy but does not obey God's law. I will point this out later: that is an impossibility. Why? Because when God saves us, He changes us.

In 1 Corinthians 6:9–11, I read some of it earlier, but listen to this. Paul wrote, “Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived.”

He names many violations of God's law: “Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you:” Past tense: “but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.” When God saves us, He changes us. All of those were violations of God's law.

Moreover, when God saves us, according to Hebrews 8:10 and Hebrews 10:16, He writes His law in our hearts: “For this is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them.” Thus, it is absolutely impossible to be sanctified while living a life of rebellion and disobedience to God and His law.

A drunkard is not a sanctified person. A murderer is not a sanctified person. A whoremonger is not a sanctified person. A thief is not a sanctified person. A child who is rebellious and disobedient is not a sanctified person. You cannot be sanctified and violate God's law. When someone says all we have to do is love, without explaining what love is—love is the fulfilling of the law—that leaves everyone free to do their own thing and say, “I'm just loving the way I determine and define love.” No. You cannot violate God's law and be a sanctified individual.

It is the Holy Spirit who leads, guides, and directs us into obedience. He convicts us and shows us our responsibility to obey. He is the agent in sanctification, but the law is the direction in sanctification. Love may be our motive, but the law is our direction. We obey God's law in order to walk pleasing unto him and walk worthy of him.

Some of you are old enough to have seen, as Alice and I did many years ago, Cecil B. DeMille's The Ten Commandments. Yul Brynner played Pharaoh, and Charlton Heston played Moses. The film came out in 1956. What many people do not know is that when the film premiered, Cecil B. DeMille came out on stage before its showing and spoke for a few minutes.

He said, "The Ten Commandments are not the laws. They are the law. Man has made 32 million laws since the commandments were handed down to Moses on Mount Sinai more than 3,000 years ago, but he has never improved on God's law. The Ten Commandments are the principles by which man may live with God and man may live with man. They are the expressions of the mind of God for his creatures. They are the charter and guide of human liberty, for there can be no liberty without law. What I hope for our production of the Ten Commandments is that those who see it shall come forth from the theater not only entertained and filled with the sight of a big spectacle, but filled with the spirit of truth, that it will bring to its audience a better understanding of the real meaning of this pattern of life that God has set down for us to follow."

Isn't that amazing? They don't make Hollywood producers like that anymore. He says this is God's law, the expression of God's will, and God expects us to obey. Without the law, there is no sin, no salvation, and no sanctification. If we're going to walk pleasing unto Him, we must walk in obedience to His law.

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we bow to Thee this day. We thank You for Your Word, Your truth, and Your law. We know that it is indeed an expression of Your will, of how we are to live and walk and please Thee. Help us to do so, Lord, by Your power, by Your Spirit, by Your grace and mercy. May we honor Thee in all that we say and do. In the name of Jesus Christ we ask and pray. Amen.

CHAPTER 6

Promises Of The Law

Part Six

Introduction and Review

First Kings chapter 8, verse 56, is the text we have been using for this series, "The Promises of the Law," number 6. Solomon is praying and dedicating the temple, and he says, "Blessed be the Lord, that hath given rest unto his people Israel, according to all that he promised: there hath not failed one word of all his good promise, which he promised by the hand of Moses his servant." Thus, we are talking about the promises of the law.

In Deuteronomy 28, beginning with verse 1, we read, "And it shall come to pass, if thou shalt hearken diligently unto the voice of the Lord thy God, to observe and do all his commandments, which I command thee this day, that the Lord thy God will set thee on high above all nations of the earth. And all these blessings shall come on thee, and overtake thee, if thou shalt hearken unto the voice of the Lord thy God. Blessed shalt thou be in the city, and blessed shalt thou be in the field." These blessings continue to verse 13. Verse 14 gives a cautionary warning. Then verse 15 says, "But it shall come to

pass if thou wilt not hearken unto the voice of the Lord thy God, to observe to do all his commandments and his statutes, which I command thee this day, that all these curses shall come upon thee and overtake thee. Cursed shalt thou be in the city and cursed shalt thou be in the field." The curses continue to the end of the chapter, verse 68.

Let us briefly be reminded of the main points covered so far. It is absolutely impossible to unhitch from the Old Testament and also to unhitch from the law of God. So many people try to say, "Well, the Old Testament is no more; it does not relate to us anymore." But without the Old Testament, we would have no idea who Jesus Christ really was. John 1:45 tells us, "Philip findeth Nathanael, and saith unto him, We have found him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph." They would not have known who Jesus was without the Old Testament, because it speaks of Moses and the prophets. It is therefore impossible to unhitch from the Old Testament or the law of God.

Without the law, we would know nothing about sin. Romans 3:20 says, "for by the law is the knowledge of sin." Without the law, we would know nothing about salvation, for Jesus Christ observed the law, kept it perfectly, and worked out a perfect righteousness for us. The Bible also teaches us that the law is our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ. Last week, we pointed out that without the law there is no sanctification. Thus, apart from the law, we would know nothing about sin, salvation, or sanctification.

Today I want to show you that we would not know anything about sanctions apart from the law. If you do not understand sanctions, you will not be able to comprehend what is going on around us in the world today. As you read through the Bible, we do indeed have promises in the law. No one can disagree that these promises have been revealed. People may not like them, may argue about them, or may try to dispute them, but the reality is that they are there.

Sanctions Defined: Blessings and Curses

When we speak of the promises in this particular passage, we are speaking of sanctions. There are promises that have a positive effect, and sanctions also have a negative effect. These positive and

negative effects are given to us under the terms of blessings and curses. You will find them repeated.

Leviticus 26, and Deuteronomy 28 and 29, particularly, list all the sanctions under blessings and curses. Deuteronomy chapters 28 through 34 are sometimes referred to as Moses' farewell. The first part deals with positive sanctions: "And it shall come to pass that thou shalt hearken diligently unto the voice of the Lord thy God, to observe and to do his commandments which I command thee this day, that the Lord thy God will set thee on high above all the nations of the earth. And all these blessings shall come on thee and overtake thee if thou shalt hearken unto the voice of the Lord thy God." These are the blessings promised for obedience.

The same language appears in verse 15 concerning the curses: "But it shall come to pass that thou wilt not hearken unto the voice of the Lord thy God, to observe to do all His commandments and His statutes, which I command thee this day, that all these curses shall come upon thee, and overtake thee." We must understand that God is the Creator. He is sovereign, and therefore He controls His creation and has the absolute right to issue sanctions. Positive sanctions, that is, blessings, always follow obedience. Negative sanctions, that is, curses, always follow disobedience.

The Irresistibility of God's Sanctions

God's sanctions are irresistible. You cannot stop them, overthrow them, thwart them, or nullify them. There is absolutely nothing that you can do to stop His sanctions. Moreover, sanctions come in a variety of forms. Oftentimes people do not recognize that they are God's sanctions, and through ignorance and unbelief attribute them to what we call luck, chance, fate, or fortune. Sometimes, like weather forecasters, they heretically pronounce the weather to be the act of Mother Nature. God does indeed send sanctions, even though many times people do not recognize them.

Another point we must understand is antinomianism. Antinomianism is one of the main problems in the Church today. It is an ancient heresy. Nomos is the Greek word for law, and anti means against. An antinomian is someone who is against God's law.

It is heresy to posit that the Law of God has no meaning, application, or binding effect for us today.

Antinomianism and Law Orders

The truth of the matter is that man is either a covenant keeper or a covenant breaker. He is either in submission and obedient to God's Law, or he is disobedient and in rebellion to God's Law.

Every law order has sanctions, including humanistic law systems. There cannot be a law order without sanctions. Sanctions defend a law order. If there are no sanctions, a law order or law system will very quickly dissipate and disappear. An unenforceable law is no law. If a law does not have teeth, it is very quickly ignored.

There are basically only two law orders: God's law order and man's law order. God's law order is based upon absolutes: Thou shalt not do this; thou shalt not do that. This is right, and this is wrong. Humanistic law orders always lead either to tyranny, totalitarianism, or anarchy. The leading idea in a humanistic law order is self-assertion: Do as you please, do what you will, do whatever you desire. To them, everything is relative; there are no absolutes. When you hear someone say, “Everything is relative,” you need to ask, “Are you absolutely sure about that?” When they say “absolutely,” they have just made an absolute out of a non-absolute.

It is like the atheist who was in a debate and blurted out, “Thank God I don't believe in that.” He was an atheist, but here he was thanking God. That is the way these people work. God's Law System is indeed an absolute.

When you consider law systems, you have only two choices: man's law system or God's law system. There is no other alternative. Societies cannot exist without law; there must be a law order. The question is not whether you will have a law order, but which law order you will have: God's law system or man's law system.

I want to show you the distinction between these law systems. Hold Deuteronomy 28; we are coming back there. Turn to 1 Samuel chapter 8, where Israel rejects God as their King and desires a man to rule over them.

Israel's Rejection of God's Law Order

In 1 Samuel 8, all the elders of Israel gathered themselves together and came to Samuel unto Ramah, saying, “Behold, thou art old, and thy sons walk not in thy ways. Now make us a king to judge us like all the nations.” They said, Give us a king to judge us. The thing displeased Samuel when they said this, and Samuel prayed unto the Lord. And the Lord said unto Samuel, “Hearken unto the voice of the people in all that they say unto thee. For they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them.” What they were doing was choosing another king instead of God.

When you change rulers, you change law systems. Although we are supposedly a constitutional republic—supposedly—which we are not in reality, not anymore, notice that there is a difference between the Obama Administration and the Trump Administration. We are not talking about kings; we are talking about the obvious difference in rule. God is going to lay out for us and clearly show us what man’s law system is going to be like.

In verse 9, God says, “Now therefore hearken unto their voice, howbeit yet protest solemnly unto them, and show them the manner of the king that shall reign over them.” You wanted a man? Here is how he is going to rule over you. This will be his manner. Samuel told all the words of the Lord unto the people that asked of him a king, and he said, “This will be the manner of the king that shall reign over you.”

He will take your sons and appoint them for himself and for his chariots and to be his horsemen, and some shall run before his chariots. And he will appoint him captains over thousands and captains over fifties, and will set them to ear his ground and to reap his harvest, and to make his instruments of war and instruments of his chariots. And he will take your daughters to be confectionaries, and to be cooks, and to be bakers. And he will take your fields, and your vineyards, and your oliveyards, even the best of them and give them to his servants. And he will take the tenth of your seed and of your vineyards and give it to his officers and to his servants. And he will take your menservants, and your maidservants, and your goodliest young men, and your asses, and put them to his work. And he will take the tenth of your sheep, and you shall be his servants.

And you shall cry out in that day, because of your king which you shall have chosen you. And the Lord will not hear you in that day. Nevertheless, the people refused to obey the voice of Samuel, and they said, “Nay, but we will have a king over us, that we also may be like all the nations, that our king may judge us, and go out before us, and fight our battles.”

I want you to understand: in God's law order, there is liberty and freedom. In man's law order, there is slavery and tyranny. God gives, and man takes. Notice all the ten percent in here: you will take the tenth of this and the tenth of that. Even Americans today would be happy if the feds only took ten percent. Each year, when we are enabled to work for ourselves, it gets further into the year. I think last year it was in July. In other words, you work until about July just to pay the taxes inherent upon you. Then the rest of the year you get to work for your own upkeep, is what it amounts to. So God is saying, you reject me and choose man, then you are choosing slavery. They swapped law orders.

First Samuel 12:12 states the matter clearly: “And when you saw Nahash the king of the children of Ammon came against you, you said unto me, Nay, but a king shall reign over us, when the Lord your God was your king.” So God was their King, and they traded God for a man. If you skip down to verse 19, you will also see that they recognized their sin, because the Word of God says, “and all the people said unto Samuel, pray for thy servants unto the Lord thy God that we die not for we have added unto all our sins this evil to ask us a king.” Wow!

Consequences of Following Man's Law

I find it interesting that so many people oppose God's law and fight against God's law, but they do not oppose or fight against man's law. They quickly, easily, and readily submit to man when they will not submit to God. What we have failed to realize and remember is that one of the reasons God sent Israel into captivity was for submitting to and obeying the laws of man. Turn to 2 Kings chapter 17, beginning there with verse 7. Here it is: “For so it was that the children of Israel had sinned against the Lord their God, which had

brought them up out of the land of Egypt from under the hand of Pharaoh, king of Egypt, and had feared other gods."

Now let me stop. Note that the Bible says they feared other gods. What is the evidence that you fear another god? Watch. Verse 8 says, "and walked in the statutes of the heathen whom the Lord cast out from before the children of Israel, and of the kings of Israel which they had made." When you trade gods, you trade law systems. Here the children of Israel refused to obey God, but they were now obeying the statutes, or laws, of the heathen. He also added, "of the kings of Israel which they had made," and all of the kings of Israel were apostate.

There was not one good king in the northern kingdom. All claimed to those golden calves that Jeroboam had made. And if you read on down, you will see how wicked they became in verse 9: "And the children of Israel did secretly those things that were not right against the Lord their God. And they built them high places in all their cities, from the tower of the watchmen to the fenced city. And they set them up images and groves in every high hill and every green tree." They became wicked by following man's law order and man's law system.

God's law order leads to blessing and to life. Man's law order always leads to curses and to death. It would be absolutely wonderful if man's law order were brought into conformity to God's law order, but unhappily, that is not the case. When there is a conflict between God's law order and man's law order, we have to take the attitude of Peter and the other apostles in Acts 5:29: "Then Peter and the other apostles answered and said, We ought to obey God rather than men."

Detailed Examination of Deuteronomy 28

Now, turn back to Deuteronomy 28. Positive sanctions, that is, the blessings, are spelled out in the first thirteen verses. Verse 14 is a cautionary verse, a cautionary warning. Then, beginning in verse 15 and continuing through verse 68, you have the negative sanctions, or the curses. There are far more verses in this chapter dealing with the curses than with the blessings.

Why is that? The answer is simple. If you are obedient, you have nothing to worry about. If you are disobedient, God is expounding to you the greatness of these curses that are going to fall upon you. You would be wise to consider your way and repent. Deuteronomy 28:1 promises national blessings: “shall come to pass, if thou shalt hearken

The promise required Israel to obey "diligently unto the voice of the Lord thy God, to observe and do all his commandments, which I command thee this day, that the Lord thy God will set thee on high above all the nations of the earth." Psalm 33:12 says, "Blessed is that nation whose God is the Lord, and the people whom he hath chosen for his own inheritance." Blessed is that nation whose God is the Lord.

Nations are made up of individuals. They include cities, towns, fields, and countryside. You cannot have a nation without having individuals. Notice verse 3, because it takes care of the city and the fields: "Blessed shalt thou be in the city, and blessed shalt thou be in the field."

God is pronouncing His blessings upon the obedient, not only in the cities, but in the fields, in the country, and in agricultural centers as well. Verses 4–6 describe personal blessings. For instance, verse 4 says, "Blessed shall be the fruit of thy body," meaning your children, "and the fruit of thy cattle, the increase of thy kine, and the flocks of thy sheep. Blessed shall be thy basket and thy store, blessed shalt thou be when thou comest in, and blessed shalt thou be when thou goest out." In other words, you will be blessed every way you turn, whether going in or coming out; it does not matter. As long as you are obedient, these blessings, these positive sanctions, will fall upon you. The remainder of this passage concerning the blessings is a mixture between personal, societal, and national blessings.

SCRIPTURE READING - Deuteronomy 28:7-14 (KJV)

> "The Lord shall cause thine enemies that rise up against thee to be smitten before thy face. They shall come out against thee one way, and flee before thee seven ways. The Lord shall command the blessings upon thee in thy storehouse, and in all that thou settest thy hand unto; and he shall bless thee in the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee. The LORD shall establish thee a

> holy people unto himself, as he hath sworn unto thee, if thou shalt keep the commandments of the LORD thy God, and walk in his ways. And all the people of the earth shall see that thou art called by the name of the LORD, and they shall be afraid of thee. And the Lord shall make thee plenteous in goods, in the fruit of thy body, and in the fruit of thy cattle, and in the fruit of thy ground, in the land which the Lord sware unto thy fathers to give thee. The Lord shall open unto thee his good treasure, the heaven to give the rain unto thy land in his season, and to bless all the work of thine hand.
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> And thou shalt lend unto many nations, thou shalt not borrow. And the Lord shall make thee the head, and not the tail, and thou shalt be above only, thou shalt not be beneath, if that thou hearken unto the commandments of the Lord thy God, which I command thee this day to observe and do them."
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> The warning follows: "and thou shalt not go aside from any of the words which I command thee this day to the right hand or to the left to go after other gods to serve them." God has listed all of these positive sanctions, all of these blessings as long as we obey. Now, the negative sanctions begin in verse 15.

Consider Deuteronomy 28:1–2: “And it shall come to pass, that thou shalt hearken diligently unto the voice of the Lord thy God, to observe and to do all his commandments which I command thee this day, that the Lord thy God will set thee on high above all nations of the earth. And all these blessings shall come on thee, and overtake thee, if thou shalt hearken unto the voice of the Lord thy God.” Notice how he said, “All these blessings shall come upon thee, and overtake thee.”

Now verse 15: “And it shall come to pass, if thou wilt not hearken unto the voice of the Lord thy God, to observe to do all his commandments and his statutes which I command thee this day, that all these curses shall come upon thee, and overtake thee.”

The Inescapable Nature of Sanctions

Both the positive and negative sanctions—the blessings and the curses—are inescapable and irresistible. God said, “If you obey me,

all these blessings are going to come upon you and overtake you." If you disobey Him, then all these curses are going to come upon you and overtake you.

The Hebrew word for "overtake" is very emphatic. If you are obeying God and He is blessing you so richly that you say, "I have so many blessings; I do not know if I can handle this. I am just going to get away from them," and you run down the road as hard and fast as you can, trying to escape the blessings of God, those blessings will chase you down, knock you down, and fall all over you. You cannot outrun them.

On the other hand, if you are disobedient and the curses of God begin falling on you, and you try to escape, those same curses will chase you down and fall on you. They will overtake you. You cannot escape them. You cannot resist them. They are there.

Historical Fulfillment of Curses in Jerusalem's Fall

I am sure you want to understand these curses, but it would take a long time to go through each one. The curses are basically the opposite of the blessings, amplified to a far greater degree. Rather than take all of these curses, let us take one and see how the curse works out in time and in history.

Look at Deuteronomy 28:7, where God promises a blessing for obedience: "The Lord shall cause thine enemies that rise up against thee to be smitten before thy face. They shall come out against thee one way and flee before thee seven ways." Here your enemies are coming and charging as one man. They are solidified; they are in one rank, saying that their rank will not be broken. But God says you will defeat them so thoroughly that they will flee seven different ways. Now look at verses 25 and 26 of Deuteronomy 28.

This is the curse of it: "The Lord shall cause thee to be smitten before thine enemies. Thou shalt go up one way against them, and flee seven ways before them, and shalt be removed into all the kingdoms of the earth. And thy carcass shall be meat unto all fowls of the air, and unto the beasts of the earth, and no man shall fray them away."

If you disobey God, you go out against your enemy in a unified rank, but flee before them seven different ways. Moreover, you will be captured, and many of you will be killed. Your carcasses will fall upon the earth, and the birds and animals will eat them. The blessing is protection; the curse is death and captivity.

There is even more detail. Beginning at verse 47 and continuing through verse 59, God says, "because thou servedst not thy God with joyfulness and with gladness of heart for the abundance of all things, therefore shalt thou serve thine enemies which the Lord shall send against thee.

SCRIPTURE READING - Deuteronomy 28:15-68 (KJV)

> Now note, in hunger and in thirst and in nakedness, and in want of all things, he, the enemy, shall put a yoke of iron upon thy neck, until he have destroyed thee. The Lord shall bring a nation against thee from far, from the end of the earth, as swift as the eagle flyeth, a nation whose tongue thou shalt not understand, a nation of fierce countenance, which shall not regard the person of the old, nor show favor to the young, and he shall eat the fruit of thy cattle, and the fruit of thy land, until thou be destroyed, which also shall not leave thee either corn, or wine, or oil, or the increase of thy kine, or flocks of thy sheep, until he have destroyed thee. And he shall besiege thee in all thy gates, until thy high and fenced walls come down wherein thou trustest, throughout all thy land. And he shall besiege thee in all thy gates, throughout all thy land, which the Lord thy God hath given thee. And thou shalt eat the fruit of thine own body, your children, the flesh of thy sons and of thy daughters, which the Lord thy God hath given thee in the siege, and in the straitness, wherewith thine enemies shall distress thee.

So that the man that is tender among you, and very delicate, his eyes shall be evil toward his brother, and toward the wife of his bosom, and toward the remnant of his children, which he shall leave, so that he will not give to any of them of the flesh of his children, whom he shall eat. Because he hath nothing left him in the siege, and in the straitness, wherewith thine enemy shall distress thee in all thy gates. The tender and delicate woman among you, which would not adventure to set the sole of her foot upon the ground for delicateness

and tenderness, her eyes shall be evil toward the husband of her bosom, and toward her son, and toward her daughter, and toward her young one that cometh out from between her feet, and toward her children which she shall bear, for she shall eat them for want of all things secretly in the siege, and straitness wherewith thine enemy shall distress thee in thy gates.

If thou wilt not observe to do all the words of this law that are written in this book, that thou mayest fear this glorious and fearful name, the Lord thy God, then the Lord will make thy plagues wonderful, and the plagues of thy seed, even great plagues, and of long continuance, and sore sicknesses, and of long continuance.

Now let us stop for a moment and think about this. The curse is that, if you disobey, you will be absolutely defeated and slaughtered. Some will be taken into captivity. Cities will be destroyed, walls broken down, goods taken, and there will be nothing to eat. You will actually be starving, and consequently you will turn to cannibalism, eating your own children and eating each other. So the question is this: Did all of these things actually come to pass? Did these curses actually fall upon the Israelites?

The answer is yes. It was the prophet Jeremiah who witnessed the fall and destruction of Jerusalem. That is why he wrote the book of Lamentations. Lamentations has five chapters; it is a funeral dirge over the fall of Jerusalem, and each of the five chapters views the fall from a different perspective. There we see what Jerusalem was and what it became because of God's judgment and God's curse upon it. Lamentations is found after Jeremiah and before Ezekiel, and the account begins with the description of Jerusalem in chapter one, through verse eleven.

"How doth the city sit solitary that was full of people?" Nobody in it now. "How is she become as a widow? She that was great among the nations and princess among the provinces. How is she become tributary?" Going into captivity. "She weepeth sore in the night, and her tears are on her cheeks. Among all her lovers she hath none to comfort her. All her friends have dealt treacherously with her. They are become her enemies. Judah is gone into captivity because of affliction and because of great servitude. She dwelleth among the heathen. She findeth no rest.

"All her persecutors overtook her between the straits. The ways of Zion do mourn, because none come to the solemn feasts. All her gates are desolate. Her priests sigh. Her virgins are afflicted, and she is in bitterness. Her adversaries are chief. Her enemies prosper. For the Lord has afflicted her for the multitude of her transgressions. Her children are going into captivity before the enemy. And from the daughter of Zion all her beauty is departed."

"Her princes are become like harts that find no pasture, and they are gone without strength before the pursuer. Jerusalem remembered in the days of her affliction and her miseries all her pleasant things that she had in the days of old, when her people fell in the hand of the enemy, and none did help her. The adversary saw her, did mock her sabbaths. Jerusalem hath grievously sinned, therefore she is removed."

"All that honoured her despise her, because they have seen her nakedness, yea, she sigheth and turneth backward. Her filthiness is in her skirts. She remembered not her last end, therefore she came down wonderfully. She had no comforter. O Lord, behold my affliction, for the enemy hath magnified himself. The adversary has spread out his hand upon all her pleasant things, for she has seen that the heathen entered into her sanctuary, whom thou didst command that they should not enter into thy congregation. All her people sigh, they seek bread. They have given their pleasant things for meat to relieve the soul. See, O LORD, and consider, for I am become vile."

Notice how the Bible here speaks of the complete destruction of Jerusalem, the want and hunger of the people. Any pleasant thing they had, they had to trade for bread. It gets worse.

"The LORD hath purposed to destroy the wall of the daughter of Zion. He hath stretched out a line, he hath not withdrawn his hand from destroying. Therefore he made the rampart and the wall to lament; they languished together."

Her gates are sunk into the ground, with no protection whatsoever. He has destroyed and broken her bars. Her king and her princes are among the Gentiles; that is, they have been taken captive. The law is no more—no one to enforce it, preach it, or teach it. Her

prophets also find no vision from the Lord. The elders of the daughter of Zion sit upon the ground and keep silence.

They have cast dust upon their heads and girded themselves with sackcloth. The virgins of Jerusalem hang down their heads to the ground. “My eyes do fail with tears. My bowels are troubled. My liver is poured out upon the earth for the destruction of the daughter of my people.” The children and the sucklings swoon in the streets of the city. They say to their mothers, “Where is corn and wine?” They swoon as the wounded in the streets of the city, when their soul is poured out into their mother’s bosom. In other words, here are children starving to death, begging for food, and there is no food to give them.

The apex of their suffering appears in Lamentations chapter four, beginning in verse six: “For the punishment of the iniquity of the daughter of my people is greater than the punishment of the sin of Sodom, that was overthrown as in a moment, and no hands stayed on her.” Jeremiah says that the punishment of Jerusalem was greater than the punishment of Sodom and Gomorrah.

“Her Nazarites were,” that is past tense, “were purer than snow, and were whiter than milk. They were more ruddy in body than rubies. Their polishing was of sapphire.” They were beautiful at one time. But now “their visage is blacker than a coal. They are not known in the streets. Their skin cleaveth to their bones, it is withered, it has become like a stick”; they are starving to death. “They that be slain with a sword are better than they that be slain with hunger, for these pine away, stricken through for want of the fruits of the field.” Those killed with a sword die quickly; those starving to death pine away and are destroyed. “The hands of the pitiful women have sodden their own children.”

They were their meat in the destruction of the daughter of my people. The Lord hath accomplished his fury. He hath poured out his fierce anger and hath kindled a fire in Zion and hath devoured the foundations thereof. Do you realize everything that God pronounced as a curse in Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 28 actually happened to Jerusalem in time and in history? You cannot run from the sanctions of God.

Confession of the Fathers in Zechariah

Look at another verse in the book of Zechariah, just over from Malachi, the next-to-last book in the Old Testament. In Zechariah chapter 1, we see what the children of Israel had to confess and acknowledge. Zechariah 1:6 says, “But my words and my statutes, which I commanded my servants the prophets, now look, did they not take hold of your fathers?” Or literally, did they not overtake your fathers? They caught up with them. “And they,” that is, the fathers, “returned and said, Like as the Lord of hosts thought to do unto us according to our ways and according to our doings, so hath he dealt with us.” We did not get away. Sanctions are inescapable. They are irresistible. We cannot outrun either his blessings or his curses.

The first application is this: Just as God has not abdicated his throne, He has not nullified his law. There are sanctions involved, both positive and negative. Those sanctions, as has just been pointed out, are inescapable and irresistible. It does not matter whether they are applied to individuals, families, churches, societies, states, or nations. You cannot escape the sanctions.

Applications and the Test of Tithing

The second thing is that we must learn to view what is happening in our world, our nation, our state, and our community in light of these sanctions. For a good illustration, pick any nation that hates God or refuses to follow biblical truths. Look at India, Africa, China, or North Korea. All you are going to see is the judgments of God upon those individuals.

These judgments and sanctions were given to Israel. That is true, but God also judged Assyria, Syria, Egypt, and many other countries. In other words, you cannot sin against God and escape. If you really want to know what is happening in the world, you have to view it in terms of God's sanctions for violations of His law.

If you want to know whether God's sanctions exist today, consider Malachi chapter 3, beginning at verse 8: “Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me, but ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings.” Because they had robbed God, they had not given

Him what He deserved. “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. And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, and he shall not destroy the fruits of your ground; neither shall your vine cast her fruit before the time in the field, saith the Lord of hosts. And all nations shall call you blessed: for ye shall be a delightsome land, saith the Lord of hosts.”

God says that if you want to test Him, prove Him herewith. Tithe, be obedient, and give God His glory and what He demands. A tithe is God charging for the use of His earth. We are His tenants. The tithe recognizes that He is God, that He deserves everything, and that He gives us everything we have. God says you can prove Him. If you do not, you will be cursed with a curse; if you do, you will be blessed. It is just that simple. Proverbs 3:9–10 says, “Honour the Lord with thy substance, and with the firstfruits of all thine increase: So shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses shall burst out with new wine.” In obedience you always find a blessing; in disobedience you always find a curse.

Closing Prayer

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we bow to thee this day. We thank you for your love, your grace, your mercy, your goodness, your kindness. Help us, Lord, to love thee and to live for thee. We pray for these, Lord, that are facing surgeries this week and for those, Lord, who have special needs. We commit them into your hands and ask for your blessing and your help. In the name of Jesus Christ, whose name we pray, amen.

CHAPTER 7

Promises Of The Law

Part Seven

Introduction and Scripture Reading

Matthew chapter 5 provides the text for this seventh message in the series on the promises of the law. I am still dealing with sanctions, having considered them last week from Deuteronomy 28.

"And seeing the multitudes, he went up into a mountain: and when he was set, his disciples came unto him. And he opened his mouth, and taught them, saying, Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted. Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth. Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled. Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God. Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God. Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be

exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you."

The Necessity of the Law

In this series, I have been demonstrating that without the law you cannot understand, know, or comprehend what sin is, because the Bible tells us clearly, "by the law is the knowledge of sin." Without the law there is no salvation—not that we keep the law to obtain salvation, but Jesus Christ was made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law. Our Lord not only died to provide a sacrifice for our sins; He also kept the law of God perfectly and worked out a perfect righteousness, which is given unto us. Galatians 3 further teaches that the law is our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ; it teaches us salvation.

I then began dealing with sanctions. Before continuing today's message, I want to share two passages because so many people try to deny and denounce the Old Testament and the law. First, consider what our Lord says in John 5, where He is speaking to the Jews.

Continuity of Old and New Testaments

Our Lord tells the Pharisees who do not believe on Him, "Do not think that I will accuse you to the Father: there is one that accuseth you, even Moses, in whom ye trust." For had they believed Moses, they would have believed Him, "for he wrote of me. But if ye believe not his writings, how shall ye believe my words?"

Our Lord is indicating that it is impossible to believe in Him without believing in the Old Testament, without believing in the law, and without believing in Moses. "If ye believe not the writings of Moses," the first five books, "how shall ye believe my words?" There is a continuity between the Old Testament and the New Testament. It is not two Bibles but one Bible.

The story of the rich man and Lazarus further illustrates this truth. Many people try to say that it is a parable, but the Lord does not say that it is a parable, and He specifies two individuals. "There was a certain rich man, which was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day: And there was a certain beggar

named Lazarus, which was laid at his gate, full of sores, And desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table: moreover the dogs came and licked his sores." Lazarus died and was carried by angels into Abraham's bosom. The rich man died, and the Bible says he was in hell.

He lifted up his eyes, being in torment. He cried and said, "Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame." Abraham says that is impossible. The rich man then asked that Lazarus be sent to his father's house, because he had five brethren and wanted him to testify to them, lest they also come into that place of torment. Abraham answered, "They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them." He replied that if one went to them from the dead, they would repent. Abraham answered, "If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead." Abraham is saying that if you do not believe Moses and the prophets, you are not going to believe the New Testament either. The very fact that Jesus Christ did rise from the dead proves very conclusively that if you do not believe the Bible, you are certainly not going to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ.

We have been talking about sanctions. Last week I dealt with Deuteronomy 28 and showed that there are positive and negative sanctions. The sanctions mentioned in Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 28 and 29 are expressed under the words "the blessings and the curses." Thus, positive sanctions are blessings, and negative sanctions are curses. When we talk about sanctions, it is not simply Old Testament theology. Sanctions exist in the New Testament as well.

Sanctions in the New Testament: Blessings and Curses

As we look in Matthew chapter 5, we find not only in this passage, but also in other passages, those who are called blessed children and those who are called cursed children. In this instance, children does not mean little kids; it means adults. We are labeled as children. Wisdom, for instance, speaks in Proverbs 8:32: "Now therefore hearken unto me, O ye children: for blessed are they that keep my

ways." Wisdom is not speaking to little babies, but to those who are able to keep the ways of God. Proverbs 20:7 says, "The just man walketh in his integrity: his children are blessed after him." These are children blessed after their father has led a life of integrity, virtue, honor, and character.

They will continue to be blessed until they die, and that is exactly what he is saying. In 1 John chapter 2, John writes, "My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." He is talking to believers. All through the New Testament, believers are referred to as children.

Then listen to 2 Peter 2, verses 14 and 15. Here is the phrase that deals with cursed children. When he talks about cursed children, he is talking about whoremongers, adulterers, and covetous individuals: "Having eyes full of adultery, and that cannot cease from sin; beguiling unstable souls: an heart they have exercised with covetous practices; cursed children: Which have forsaken the right way, and are gone astray, following the way of Balaam the son of Bosor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness." He is talking about these adulterers and covetous individuals, and he calls them cursed children.

You must grasp this truth: God is immutable. Immutable simply means that God is unchangeable. That which was true of God in the Old Testament is equally true of God in the New Testament. God does not change, and consequently His law does not change either. That is why we talk about the immutability of God. In Malachi 3 and verse 6, He says, "I the LORD change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed." The same truth appears in the New Testament: "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever." The sovereign, just, and righteous God who ruled in the Old Testament is the same sovereign, just, and righteous God who rules in the New Testament. There is no difference in His word, for Psalm 119 verse 89 says, "For ever, O LORD, thy word is settled in heaven." When we talk about sanctions, we are talking about judgments and blessings. Because God is righteous, His judgments fall upon those who rebel against Him.

The Immutability of God and His Law

God is faithful, and His solemn threatenings are fulfilled. Because God is omnipotent—that is, He is all-powerful—none can resist Him, none can thwart Him, and none can hinder Him. Because God is omnipresent, there can be no secret sins, because God is everywhere at one time in the totality of His being. You cannot hide from God. In fact, anthropomorphically speaking—that is, in man-form speaking—the Bible says in Proverbs 15, “The eyes of the LORD are in every place, beholding the evil and the good.” That speaks of God's omniscience, or God's omnipresence. And, of course, God is omniscient in the fact that He knows everything.

There is no problem that can master Him. There is no difficulty that can baffle His wisdom. God is not only omniscient, omnipresent, and omnipotent, but also faithful and righteous; everything that He does is absolutely perfect. That is why, in Romans 2 and verse 2, we read, “But we are sure that the judgment of God is according to truth against them which commit such things.” We are sure that the judgments of God are according to truth. Not only are God's judgments according to truth, but God's blessings are according to truth as well. He bestows His blessings in grace and in mercy. When you look at Matthew chapter 5, you have an awful lot of blessings mentioned. These blessings are known as sanctions, but they are positive sanctions.

The Beatitudes as Positive Sanctions with Implied Negatives

When you get to the Sermon on the Mount, to which this passage refers, there are individuals who seek to limit this sermon and its applications. I have read books that say the Sermon on the Mount applies to Jews only. I have also read individuals who say it applies only to the saved. If you look in verse 1, “And seeing the multitudes, he went up into a mountain: and when he was set, his disciples came unto him.” There were the multitudes there, and there were His disciples. Whether the disciples came to Him alone, or whether some of the multitude came with them, I do not know; but if they did, then certainly this sermon would have been to a mixed multitude as well.

So let me give you a statement by Arthur W. Pink. He hits the nail on the head concerning Matthew chapter 5. Listen carefully.

He says: “There has been considerable difference of opinion concerning the ones to whom this sermon really applies, the saved or the unsaved. Extreme positions have been taken on both sides with a good deal of unnecessary dogmatism. Personally we regard this sermon as a forecast of and an epitome of the entire oral ministry of Christ, that it summarizes the general tenor of his whole teaching. The older we grow, the less do we approve of drawing hard and fast lines through the Scriptures, limiting their application by insisting that certain parts belong only to such and such a class, and, under the guise of rightly dividing the word, apportioning segments of it to the Jews only, to the Gentiles only, or to the Church of God only.”

“Man makes his canals rigidly straight, but God’s rivers wind in and out, and God’s commandment is exceeding broad, and we must be on our guard against placing restrictions of our own.” He is correct: we must understand 2 Timothy 3:16–17: “All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable” for doctrine, correction, reproof, and instruction in righteousness. That includes Matthew chapter 5. This passage does not begin with maledictions, curses, and woes, but with blessings. Our Lord, however, was not hesitant to pronounce maledictions, curses, and woes. Read Matthew 11, Matthew 23, and Luke chapter 10. He pronounced curses and woes upon cities and groups as well. “Woe unto thee, Chorazin! Woe unto thee, Bethsaida!” Then: “Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!” He does pronounce these negative sanctions upon individuals who are wicked and rebellious.

Now, the interesting thing is when you look at Matthew chapter 5 and you see all of these blessings that are being pronounced, we must understand that in reality there are some curses being pronounced as well. Our Lord does not elaborate upon the curses. He leaves it to the hearer or to the reader to understand and to apply these truths.

Now let me tell you something that I've told you a multitude of times and this is just for your information so that we can work through this passage. Every negative has a positive. Every positive has a negative. One of our problems is when we read scripture and

we see positives, that's all we think about. We never concern ourselves with the negatives. Likewise, when we read scripture and we see negatives, we never concern ourselves with the positives. We have to understand that you cannot have a positive without a negative, and you cannot have a negative without a positive. These principles go together in scripture.

Exposition of the Beatitudes and Their Implied Curses

When our Lord begins in verse 3 and he says "blessed" and he uses the word "blessed" all the way down through verse 11. The Greek word "blessed" is the word makarios, which literally means blessed or happy. Now, let's begin with verse 3. I'm going to give you another quick quote and then I'm going to show you some scripture. Look in verse 3. He begins by saying, "Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." So, let's ask the question, who are the poor in spirit? And what does it mean to be poor in spirit? The pronounced blessing in verse three, the positive sanction in verse three, is only upon those who are poor in spirit. First of all, let me give you a quote by Pink again, describing what it means to be poor in spirit. Then I'm going to show it to you from scripture. He says this: "Being poor in spirit, it is the opposite of that haughty, self-assertive and self-sufficient disposition, which the world so much admires and praises.

It is the very reverse of that independent and defiant attitude which refuses to bow to God, which determines to brave things out, which says with Pharaoh, 'Who is the LORD, that I should obey his voice?' To be poor in spirit is to realize that I am nothing, that I have nothing, that I can do nothing, and that I have need of all things. Poverty of spirit is a consciousness of my emptiness, the result of the Spirit's work within.

It issues from the painful discovery that all my righteousnesses are as filthy rags. It follows the awakening that my best performances are unacceptable, yea, an abomination to the thrice holy One. Poverty of spirit evidences itself by its bringing the individual into the dust before God, acknowledging his utter helplessness and his deserving of nothing but hell. Now when you

stop and think about that, it was Jacob who said, “I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies.”

Everything that we do is tainted with sin, even our prayer life. We cannot even pray without thoughts entering our minds and our minds wandering. We cannot love the Lord without even our love being tainted with sin because we are sinners. And you realize, if God gave us what we really, truly deserved, we not only would not be alive, we would be in hell ourselves, because every sinner deserves justice. But God in His grace has given us mercy.

So, Pink is saying that the poor in spirit are those who are nothing, have nothing, can do nothing, and have a need of all things. To be poor in spirit is to be someone who has a broken heart, and a contrite heart, and a humble heart.

Psalm 34:18 says, “The LORD is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit.” The LORD is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart, and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit. That is, you have nothing in yourself.

Psalm 51 is a Psalm where David is acknowledging and confessing his own sin. He says in verse 17, “The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.” What is a broken and contrite heart? It is someone who has nothing in and of himself, can do nothing, and has need of God in His grace.

Isaiah 57:15 states this over and over in Scripture: “For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones.”

Isaiah 66:2 says, “For all those things hath mine hand made, and all those things have been, saith the LORD: but to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word.” So when God says, “Blessed are the poor in spirit,” He is talking about blessed are those individuals who are humble, broken, contrite, submissive, and who tremble at His word.

Our Lord said, “Blessed are the poor in spirit.” If the poor in spirit are blessed, what about those who are not poor in spirit? The answer is that they would be cursed. Do you understand what He is saying?

Someone who is poor in spirit is broken, humble, submissive, and dependent upon God, but someone who is not poor in spirit is arrogant, haughty, heady, high-minded, and trusts in himself. That is why Jeremiah 17:5 says, “Thus saith the LORD; Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the LORD.” So those who are not poor in spirit are not blessed; they are cursed.

Here is a simple truth: if you are not blessed, you are cursed. If you will remember correctly, in Proverbs 6, one of the seven things that God hates is a proud look. The proud look speaks of that haughty, arrogant, rebellious attitude people have when they refuse to bow and surrender to the Word of God. When He says, “Blessed are the poor in spirit,” if you are not poor in spirit, then you are not blessed in this instance. You would be cursed. Thus, you have a positive and a negative. If you will skip down to verse 4, look what He says: Matthew 5:4, “Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted.” Mourning is something that you and I do not particularly enjoy; it is something that goes against our flesh.

The truth is, we would much rather rejoice and be happy than have to be concerned with problems and circumstances. We do not necessarily like to mourn. But look at this: “Blessed are they that mourn.” Now, if we are blessed, why are we mourning? That is a decent question. If we have been blessed by God, why are we mourning? The answer is that we mourn over our sins. We mourn over the sins of others, the sins of our society, and the sins of our nation. Does it make you happy

That the governor of New York signed a bill allowing abortion up to the time a child is born and even immediately thereafter? Of course not. Because it is murder. It should cause us to mourn. It should cause us to mourn because of the sodomy and the transgenderism, the pedophilia, and all the things that are going on in this country. If you study the books of Ezra and Daniel, you will find that both men not only confessed and acknowledged their own sins; they also confessed and acknowledged the sins of their nation, society, and people. So our Lord says, "Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted." In other words, the only way you are going to be comforted is if you are mourning.

In this light, consider Isaiah 61:2–3: "...to proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn; To appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, that he might be glorified." Here are those who are mourning. God says they are going to be comforted; they are going to have the oil of gladness in their lives.

Lamentations was written concerning the fall and destruction of Jerusalem. Lamentations 1:4 says, "The ways of Zion do mourn, because none come to the solemn feasts: all her gates are desolate." In other words, everything is broken down. Stop and look around at the church today. Look at Christianity today. Look at religion today, using that word very broadly. Very few respect anything that is biblical and right today. I remember when I was a boy going to church. Most of the men in the church were farmers, and most of the men smoked. I watched with my own eyes as our pastor walked up to a man who was smoking.

In former days, a man would take the cigarette out of his mouth, put it behind him, and either hold it or pinch it out while he talked to the pastor. Today folks would never think of doing that; they would simply blow the smoke in your face and keep going. There has been a change.

Our Lord tells us that the ways of Zion do mourn. You remember that passage in Ezekiel chapter 9? God said, “And the LORD said unto him, Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and set a mark upon the foreheads of the men that sigh and that cry for all the abominations that be done in the midst thereof.” God said to set a mark on the foreheads of those who were sighing and crying, mourning over the wickedness of the city. He was going to spare them; the rest were going to be destroyed.

In Luke chapter 6 and verse 25, our Lord says, “Woe unto you that are full! for ye shall hunger. Woe unto you that laugh now! for ye shall mourn and weep.” In other words, we may mourn now and laugh later, or we may laugh now and mourn later. James chapter 4 and verse 9 indeed gives a command: “Be afflicted, and mourn, and

weep: let your laughter be turned to mourning, and your joy to heaviness."

Now look back at verse 4: "Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted." If those who mourn are blessed, and if they realize that their mourning shall be turned into joy and comfort, what will be the state of those who do not mourn, but laugh, ridicule, and mock? Are they blessed, or are they cursed? You cannot have a positive without a negative. Every one of these blessings that God pronounces also includes a curse, a negative sanction.

Look in verse 5: "Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth." The word "meek" is the Greek word praus, which refers

This refers to a mildness of disposition, a gentleness of spirit, a meekness and submissiveness. The word actually means to be broken to yoke. You can take a young oxen or two young oxen and put a yoke upon their necks. They will kick and twist and do everything imaginable until they are broken to yoke. Once they are broken to yoke, they are gentle, submissive, and plow.

The same thing happens with a horse. You put the bridle and reins on the horse, and you put the saddle on the horse. The horse may kick and do all kinds of things until it is broken; then it is submissive. That is basically what our Lord said to Saul of Tarsus when he fell on the road to Damascus: "Saul, Saul, it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks." The pricks were a long, pointed stick sharpened at one end. When the oxen kicked, they would be stuck with that stick. He was saying, in effect, that you do not want to do that.

The meek, then, are those who are broken to yoke. Meekness toward God is the disposition that you and I have concerning His dealings for us, with us, and in us. We are not disputing with God, resisting God, asserting ourselves, demanding certain things, or pursuing self-interest. Meekness stems from absolute trust in God, in His sovereignty, and in His providence. Many providential things happen to us—situations and circumstances we do not like and would not desire, but in which we find ourselves. What can we do? We can argue, get mad, and become upset, or we can say, "Lord, I didn't want this. I didn't plan on this."

“It was not my fault. It was brought on me in Your providence. I'm not going to argue with You. I'm just going to submit and allow You to work it out.” That is literally a meek attitude.

Now look what He said: “Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth.” Let me ask you a question. If you're not meek, what's going to happen to you? You're certainly not going to inherit the earth, because only the meek are going to inherit the earth.

Look in Psalm 37, beginning with verses 1 and 2: “Fret not thyself because of evildoers, neither be thou envious against the workers of iniquity.” Don't get bent out of shape. You say, “Well, I have to do this and I have to do that. They go around, they go to the beach on Sunday, they go fishing on Sunday, they go do this, they do that. I have to go to church.” And God says, “No, don't be envious of the workers of iniquity.” Why? “For they shall soon be cut down like the grass, and wither as the green herb.”

Skip down to verse 7: “Rest in the LORD, and wait patiently for him: fret not thyself because of him who prospereth in his way, because of the man who bringeth wicked devices to pass. Cease from anger, and forsake wrath: fret not thyself in any wise to do evil. For evildoers shall be cut off: but those that wait upon the LORD, they shall inherit the earth. For yet a little while, and the wicked shall not be: yea, thou shalt diligently consider his place, and it shall not be. But the meek shall inherit the earth; and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace.”

Now look at verse 34: “Wait on the LORD, and keep his way, and he shall exalt thee to inherit the land: when the wicked are cut off, thou shalt see it. I have seen the wicked in great power, and spreading himself like a green bay tree. Yet he passed away, and, lo, he was not: yea, I sought him, but he could not be found. Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright: for the end of that man is peace. But the transgressors shall be destroyed together: the end of the wicked shall be cut off.”

Now, “Blessed are the meek,” why? “For they shall inherit the earth.” But what about those who are not meek? They shall be cut off. They shall be destroyed. They shall not inherit the earth. So when our Lord blesses the meek, at the same time it places a curse

upon those who are not meek. The blessed meek shall inherit the earth; those who are not in that group shall be cut off.

Now go back to Matthew 5 and look down to verse 6. I'm just trying to show you very quickly the positive and negative sanctions that go together. He says, "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled." It does not take a rocket scientist to figure out that if those who hunger and thirst after righteousness are blessed, then those who do not hunger and thirst after righteousness are cursed.

Now the word "righteousness" here is that which is right, that which is just, that which is upright, that which is pure, that which is correct, not only in thinking but feeling and acting as well. Those that hunger and thirst after righteousness, God says, are being blessed because they are going to be filled. Those who do not hunger and thirst after righteousness are not blessed and they will not be filled, because they are cursed.

You cannot have a positive without a negative. And every one of these blessings indicates there are indeed negatives. Look in verse seven. "Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy." It is the merciful that obtain mercy. What do the unmerciful obtain? And the answer is they get God's judgment. They get God's curse. Listen and think about it. 2 Samuel 22 and verse 27, "With the pure thou wilt shew thyself pure; and with the froward thou wilt shew thyself unsavoury." You know what something is that is unsavoury? It's not good. You don't like it. You want to spit it out.

When I was a boy, my father and mother took us to our neighbor's house. The adults were in the living room having coffee and fellowshipping, while all of us children were playing. I could not have been more than eight or nine, but it was the first year that saccharin came out. I had never heard of or seen saccharin. My father called me and said, "Son, come get me another cup of coffee."

I went into the kitchen. My dad always took two teaspoons of sugar in his coffee. The neighbor lady said, "The saccharin's on the table." I opened the bottle, put two teaspoons of those little tablets in the coffee, and stirred it. I will never forget my father taking the first

sip. He spit it right out on the carpet and said, "Son, if I didn't think this stuff would kill you, I'd make you drink every drop of it."

How would I know? I had never heard of saccharin before in my life. I did not know that one of those little pills was equal to a whole teaspoon of sugar. It was quite unsavoury; he did not like it at all. The truth of the matter is that with the froward, God says, "I'm going to show myself unsavoury towards you; you won't like what I'm going to do to you."

That same scripture is given to us in Psalm 18:26: "With the pure thou wilt shew thyself pure; and with the froward thou wilt shew thyself froward." In other words, God said, "I'm going to treat you just exactly the way you treat others." In James 2:13, he says, "For he shall have judgment without mercy, that hath shewed no mercy." Therefore, when God says, "Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy," the opposite is, Cursed are the unmerciful, for they shall not receive mercy. You cannot have a positive without a negative.

Now look at verse 8: "Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God." Purity of heart is an absolute necessity if you are to see God. The Greek word for purity is katharos, referring to that which is ethical, free from corrupt desire, free from sin and guilt, and free from every admixture of that which is false.

It means that which is sincere, genuine, blameless, and innocent. The only way we can be pure of heart is through the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ. Only Jesus Christ gives us purity of heart. None of us can boast of a pure heart, a pure mind, a pure disposition, or a pure being in and of ourselves. We are not that way by nature, and we cannot make ourselves that way. Only Jesus Christ can do that.

So when He says, "Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God," you have to ask yourself: If only the pure in heart are going to see God, what is going to happen to those who are not pure in heart? The implication is that they shall not see God. If you do not see Him, you are separated from Him. Death is more than physical separation; there is a spiritual death. Do you remember Revelation 22:15? When it speaks of the kingdom and everything that is in it, it

says, "For without are dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie."

If the pure in heart are going to see God, they are blessed. Those who are not pure in heart, those who have not been made pure in the Lord Jesus Christ, are cursed, and they shall not see God. They shall be judged by Him.

Then, in verse 9, He says, "Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God." The word for peacemakers refers not only to peacemakers, but also to those who love peace. The reason they are peacemakers is because they love peace. Our Lord spoke plainly: What would you call the troublemakers—the wicked and rebellious, those who fight against God and sow discord? Obviously, they are not going to be blessed; they are going to be cursed. When He says, "blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God," perhaps we should think of John 8 and verse 44 when He looked at those Jews who did not believe in Him.

Jesus said, “Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it.” If the peacemakers are going to be called the children of God, then obviously those who are not peacemakers are going to be the cursed children, children of the devil, and certainly not children of God.

Now, look at verses 10 through 12. He said, “Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” The only way that you can be persecuted for righteousness' sake is if you are righteous. You cannot be persecuted for being righteous if you are not righteous. Here is a blessing upon those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, and He says, “for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” What about those who are not persecuted for righteousness' sake because they are not righteous? Is theirs the kingdom of heaven? No, it cannot possibly be. This positive sanction is only upon those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, which means that they are righteous by the grace of God.

Then He said in verse 11, “Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake.” Notice the word “falsely.” They are lying against you. You are not that way, but they are lying against you. Years ago, someone made a statement concerning me, saying that I had said something I never said, and used a word I have never used. I asked Alice, “Have you ever, in all the time that we've been married, heard me use that word?” She said, “No.” I asked my daughters, and they said, “No sir.” The truth is, I never had. The person was proved to be a liar a little later.

Our Lord says we are blessed when men revile us, persecute us, and say all manner of evil against us falsely. We are not blessed if what they say against us is the truth. If people cannot curse you for being righteous, that means you are not righteous.

Look at verse 12. He says, “Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.” So, if you are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, He is saying that you are in good company, because you are in the company of those prophets in the Old Testament who were persecuted for bringing the word of God and the truth of God.

Now, here’s the point of my reading and going over all of these twelve verses very quickly. Entire volumes have been written on these twelve verses. It was my intent not to expound these twelve verses, but just to demonstrate one simple point: sanctions occur in the New Testament. You have blessings and you have curses. The fact of the matter is, it is absolutely impossible to escape God’s sanctions. I pointed that out last week when we looked at the negative sanctions, and He said clearly that these curses will come upon you and overtake you.

The Inescapability of God's Sanctions

You cannot outrun the judgments of God. Neither can you outrun the blessings of God. Last week I ended with Malachi chapter 3, verses 8 through 11. I will not read it, but you remember that our Lord said, "Ye are cursed with a curse: for ye have robbed me, even this whole nation." He had not only said, “You are cursed with a curse” individually; He went on to say, “This whole nation is cursed.”

Then He said, "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."

In other words, it will inundate you; it will flood you. But the point is that He said, "Prove me now herewith, saith the LORD." This is a way that we can prove those sanctions ourselves. We will know whether we are blessed, and we will certainly know whether or not we are cursed.

God's sanctions are irresistible and inescapable. You cannot resist them, stop them, thwart them, overthrow them, or escape them. You cannot outrun them, either the negative sanctions or the positive sanctions.

Here is one application: if you do not believe that there are sanctions in the New Testament, try dying one time without the Lord Jesus Christ. You will find out there are sanctions. Turn to Hebrews chapter 10, verse 29. The more you deny the Lord Jesus, denounce Him, and resist Him, the worse becomes your punishment. Look at Hebrews chapter 10, beginning with verse 28: "He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses."

You violated the law that God gave through Moses, and God said, “No mercy”; you were stoned to death with two or more witnesses. So he that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses.

“Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace? For we know him that hath said, Vengeance belongeth unto me, I will recompense, saith the Lord. And again, The Lord shall judge his people. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.” How much worse punishment shall he be thought worthy who hath trodden under foot the Son of God?

The more you despise Him, denounce Him, deny Him, and denigrate Him, the worse your judgment will be. There are sanctions in the New Testament, just as there are sanctions in the Old Testament. We have one Bible, not two; one God, the same God in

the Old Testament and in the New Testament, and His law is still the same. You cannot escape or resist His sanctions.

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we bow to Thee this day. We thank You for Your word, Your truth, and Your blessings. But Lord, we also thank You for Your curses, because we know that all of Your judgments are according to truth. Thou art the righteous, holy, and just judge of all the earth. We commit ourselves unto Thee and ask You to work in our hearts and give us grace that we may serve Thee acceptably with reverence and godly fear. In Thy name we pray, amen.

CHAPTER 8

Promises Of The Law

Part Eight

Introduction: The Continuity and Purpose of the Law

Deuteronomy 5, verses 6 and 7: "I am the Lord thy God, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage. Thou shalt have none other gods before me." This is number 8 on the promises of the law, and today we will deal with the first commandment. By this time in this series, we have seen the utter impossibility of unhitching from the Old Testament, and especially from the law of God.

There is a continuity in the Bible. You cannot deny or destroy one part without denying and destroying the other part. Once you begin to deny and destroy any part, you actually destroy the whole. Without the law, we would have absolutely no knowledge of sin: "For by the law is the knowledge of sin," Romans 3 and verse 20.

Without the law, we would have no knowledge of salvation, because Jesus Christ kept the law of God perfectly in order that He might work out a perfect righteousness for us. We not only need

forgiveness; we need righteousness. The Bible teaches in Galatians chapter 3 that the law is our schoolmaster to bring us into faith in Jesus Christ. Without the law, we would have no idea about sanctification, according to 1 Thessalonians chapter 4. And without the law, we would have no knowledge of sanctions.

Negative and Positive Aspects of the Commandments

In the Bible there are negative sanctions and positive sanctions. When you look at the Ten Commandments, you will notice many negatives: "thou shalt not, thou shalt not." In fact, there are only two positives: "remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy" and "honor thy father and thy mother." Everything else is cast in negative terms.

The problem is that sometimes, when we look at the negative, we focus only on the negative and never think of the positive. Or, when we see a positive, we think only of the positive and never think of the negative. Every negative has a positive, and every positive has a negative. Moreover, when something in the Bible is clearly expressed, we usually consider only what is expressed and never think about what is implied or what is opposite to it. Thus, when we think of the Ten Commandments, we usually think in negative terms, because eight out of ten are cast in negative terms.

When we think of the Ten Commandments, everybody thinks about the fifth, and practically everybody can quote it, especially in Ephesians chapter 6, verses 1–3: "Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. Honor thy father and thy mother, which is the first commandment with promise, that your days may be long upon the earth which the Lord thy God hath given thee."

Whenever we hear that this is the first commandment with promise, we tend to think the Fifth Commandment is the only one with a promise attached to it. The truth is that if you understand the Fifth Commandment, you will also understand that each of the other commandments has a promise implied in it.

Moreover, when you look at Ephesians 6:2, the Greek word translated "first" in the phrase "the first commandment with promise" is protos. It is translated in our Bibles as "chief," or it could also be translated as "principal." It does not mean singular. Thus,

"the first commandment with promise" means the chief commandment with a special promise annexed to it.

A. T. Robertson, in his Greek New Testament, discusses the little word en—E-N, epsilon nu; in Greek we would spell it I-N. He says that the Greek word literally means "accompanied by."

The fifth commandment is the first commandment, or chief commandment, accompanied by a special promise. Other promises are there, but this one has a special promise. Albert Barnes, commenting on the fifth commandment as a commandment with a promise, says:

"Which is the first commandment with a promise, with a promise annexed to it. The promise was that their days should be long in the land which the Lord their God would give them. It is not to be supposed that the observance of the first four commandments would not be attended with a blessing, but no particular blessing is promised. It is true indeed that there is a general declaration annexed to the second commandment, God would show mercy to thousands of generations of them that loved Him and that kept His commandments. But that is rather a declaration in regard to all the commands of God than a promise annexed to that specific commandment."

Quotes on the Promises of the Law

It is an assurance that obedience to the law of God would be followed with blessings to a thousand generations, and is given in view of the first and second commandments together, because they related particularly to that honor that was due to God. But the promise in the fifth commandment is a special promise. It does not relate to obedience to God in general, but is a particular assurance that those who honor their parents shall have a particular blessing as a result of that obedience.

So he is saying, look, it is indeed a special promise in the fifth commandment, but that does not negate the fact that there are promises in all the commandments. Once you understand that the fifth commandment is the commandment that has this special promise annexed to it, then you can also be ready to understand that

there are implied promises in all of the commandments, although they are not necessarily annexed to each of the commandments like the fifth one is.

This is from the Westminster Confession of Faith, chapter 19, on the law of God: “Although true believers be not under the law as a covenant of works, to be thereby justified or condemned, yet it is of great use to them, as well as to others, in that as a rule of life, informing them of the will of God and their duty, it directs and binds them to

Believers should walk accordingly, discovering the sinful pollutions of their nature, hearts, and lives. By examining themselves through the law, they may come to greater conviction of sin, humiliation for it, and hatred against it, together with a clearer sight of their need of Christ and the perfection of His obedience.

The law is likewise useful to the regenerate in restraining their corruptions, because it forbids sin. Its threatenings show what their sins deserve and what affliction in this life they may expect from them, although they have been freed from the curse threatened in the law. Its promises, in like manner, show God's approbation of obedience and what blessings they may expect upon performing it, although those blessings are not due to them by the law as the covenant of works.

Therefore, when a man does good and refrains from evil because the law encourages the one and deters from the other, this is no evidence that he is under the law and not under grace. The law contains promises: as we obey, God gives these blessings. But our obedience does not mean that we are under the law as a covenant of works. We are still under grace.

The last sentence in chapter 19 says: “Neither are the aforementioned uses of the Law contrary to the grace of the Gospel, but do sweetly comply with it, the Spirit of Christ subduing and enabling the will of man to do that freely and cheerfully, which the will of God revealed in the Law requires to be done.” In other words, the confession is simply saying that it is God who not only saves us in His grace, but it is God's grace that enables us then to be obedient to the Law.

Cultural and Political Importance of God's Law

Most of you are old enough to have seen Cecil B. DeMille's The Ten Commandments. Cecil B. DeMille came out on the stage when that show was first coming out and made several statements. Some of this was recorded in a catalog given to those who had attended. Speaking about the Ten Commandments, he said: “The theme of this picture is whether men ought to be ruled by God's law, or whether they are to be ruled by the whims of a dictator like Ramses. Are men the property of the state, or are they free souls under God? This same battle continues throughout the world today. The Ten Commandments are not laws, they are the law. Man has made 32 million laws since they were handed down to Moses on Mount Sinai more than 3,000 years ago, but he has never improved on God's law.”

So here is Cecil B. DeMille coming out and saying, here is where we are. We are either going to be under God's law or we are going to be under man's law.

Now here is another quote that may surprise you. This quote is by President Harry S. Truman. You remember he was the president that had the motto on his desk, "The buck stops here." And when he and Bess, I think his wife's name was, when he ceased being President they just drove off in their little car and went to their house, no secret service protection, and no pension. I mean it was just, it was over, his service was over and he was there. But Harry Truman said this, listen carefully, "The fundamental basis of this nation's laws was given to Moses on the Mount. The fundamental basis of our Bill of Rights comes from the teachings which we get from Exodus and Matthew and Isaiah and Paul. I don't think that we comprehend that enough these days. Now listen, if we don't have the proper fundamental moral background, we will finally wind up with a totalitarian government which does not believe in the rights for anybody." Wow, that's just about where we are today.

Because we have neglected the law of God. When we seek to understand God's law, you must understand that it is not necessarily just a spiritual exercise. It is that, but it should also be a personal, political, and societal exercise, as well as a spiritual exercise. The reason is that God is absolutely sovereign, and His law applies to

every area and sphere of life. It is our standard by which we are to live, govern, and do anything and everything.

I want to mention that it is not my intent to expound each one of these Ten Commandments. We are going to look at each one, but it is not the scope of this series to go into detail concerning every commandment. Rather, the scope of this series is to show you the promises that are implied or inherent in each one of these commandments.

Exposition of the First Commandment

If you do not have the book, I would encourage you to buy R. J. Rushdoony's Institutes of Biblical Law. It is a book just about this thick, but it is a great exposition of the Ten Commandments. It is divided into little chapters of three or four pages each that can be easily understood and read in fifteen or twenty minutes. There are two other volumes, but the first volume is really important if you want to understand and comprehend the Ten Commandments.

The First Commandment

The First Commandment is found in verse 7 of Deuteronomy 5 and also in Exodus chapter 20. It is very simple and straightforward: “Thou shalt have none other gods before me,” or, “Thou shalt have no other gods before me.” In this commandment, God enjoins that He alone is to be worshipped, and He requires a worship free from all superstition.

Matthew Poole is commenting specifically on this first commandment, and his words identify three forbidden relations: opposition, conjunction, and subordination. He says, “He forbids the worship of all others not only in opposition to Him, but also in conjunction with Him, or in subordination to Him.” Thus, the commandment forbids worshipping someone who opposes God—a false god—or someone worshipped in conjunction with Him, as in polytheism, or someone subordinate or under Him. None of that is to be done; it is God and God only.

Keil and Delitzsch say, “…the sentence is quite a general one, and not only prohibits polytheism and idolatry, the worship of idols in

thought, word, and deed, but also commands the fear, love, and the worship of God the Lord."

Nearly all the commandments are couched in the negative form of prohibition because they presuppose the existence of sin and evil desires in the human heart. I believe there are other reasons as well, but certainly that is one reason.

Adam Clarke says, "This commandment prohibits every species of mental idolatry and all inordinate attachments to earthly and sensible things. As God is the fountain of happiness, and no intelligent creature can be happy but through Him, whoever seeks happiness in the creature is necessarily an idolater, as he puts the creature in the place of the Creator, expecting that from the gratification of his passions, and the use or abuse of earthly things, which is to be found in God alone. The very first commandment of the whole series is divinely calculated to prevent man's misery and promote his happiness by taking from all false dependents and leading him to God Himself, the fountain of all good."

Each commentator says something different about the first commandment, yet they are basically saying the same thing: God is one, God alone is God, and God is to be worshipped totally and completely—Him and Him alone.

The Exclusiveness, Unity, and Sovereignty of God

Since this first commandment teaches and demonstrates that God alone is to be worshipped, let me point out three things, make some applications, and show the truth, the implication, and the implied promise in the first commandment. When God says, "Thou shalt have no other gods before me," this simple commandment demonstrates, number one, the exclusiveness of God, the unity of God, and the sovereignty of God.

By the exclusiveness of God, I mean that God is God alone, and beside Him there is no other. There are many that are called gods, and many people try to make gods out of their imagination, or out of wood, stone, silver, or gold; but they are not gods. God is exclusively the one true and living God. Beside Him, there is none else.

In Isaiah 43:11, God speaks: “I, even I, am the Lord, and beside me there is no Savior.” God is God alone; beside Him there is no Savior. He is the only Savior, and there is no Savior beside Him.

Isaiah 44:6 says, “Thus saith the Lord the King of Israel, and his Redeemer the Lord of Hosts; I am the first, and I am the last; and beside me there is no God.” Here we are talking about the exclusiveness of God. He is God alone. There is no God beside Him. Verse 8 says, “Fear ye not, neither be afraid: have not I told thee from that time, and have declared it? ye are even my witnesses. Is there a God beside me? yea, there is no God; I know not any.” Now you must remember that God is omniscient. He knows all things, everything, and God says there is no God. I know it. He is the only one true and living God.

In Isaiah 45:5-6, God is speaking to Cyrus and makes this statement: “I am the Lord, and there is none else, there is no God beside me: I girded thee, though thou hast not known me: that they may know from the rising of the sun, and from the west, that there is none beside me. I am the Lord, and there is none else.” I am the Lord, and there is none else. There is no God beside Him.

Verse 21 says, “Tell ye, and bring them near; yea, let them take counsel together: who hath declared this from ancient time? who hath told it from that time? have not I the Lord? and there is no God else beside me; a just God and a Savior; there is none beside me.” So we are talking about the exclusiveness of God. He is the just God and the Savior; there is none beside Him.

In Hosea 13:4, God says, “Yet I am the Lord thy God from the land of Egypt, and thou shalt know no God but me: for there is no Savior beside me.” In other words, there is no God but Him, and there is no Savior beside Him.

God is saying, “I am the exclusive God; there is none else.” Since the first commandment is, “Thou shalt have no other gods before me,” it means that God is God alone. He is exclusively God, and there is none beside Him. The second thing we see in this commandment is the unity of God. When we speak of the unity of God, we mean that God is one. There are not three gods. There is one God, and the burden of the Old Testament is the unity of God.

There is a passage in Deuteronomy 6:4 known as the Shema Israel. Every Orthodox synagogue usually begins its service with this passage: “Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God is one Lord.” Shema Yisrael Adonai Eloheinu Adonai Echad. Then verse 5 says, “And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, with all thy soul, and with all thy might.” Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God is one Lord.

When it comes to understanding God, you cannot understand God. God is infinite, and if you truly understood God, you would have to be God yourself. You would have to be infinite yourself.

There are many things in Scripture that we are not able particularly to understand. But we can believe them and bow to them, even though we do not necessarily understand them. When it comes to the unity of God, this is exactly what we are talking about: God is one God, and yet He has revealed Himself in three persons—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

When you get home today, I encourage you to look up what is known as the Athanasian Creed. Athanasius was a Christian who wrote this creed in the fourth century, during a great debate over Jesus Christ and God. I am not going to read the entire creed, but I would encourage you to read it. It is only a couple of pages long, and it is very beautiful. Before I read it, let me clarify that when I use the word Catholic, I am not referring to the Roman Catholic Church. Catholic simply means universal.

Years ago, when I was a teenager, I went to a Presbyterian church where they were quoting the Apostles’ Creed. When it came to, “I believe in the Holy Catholic Church,” I said, “I’m not going to say that; I don’t believe in the Roman Catholic Church.” I did not know that Catholic simply meant universal. It has no reference here to the Roman Catholic Church.

Listen carefully: “Whosoever will be saved, before all things, it is necessary that he hold the Catholic faith,” that is, the universal faith. “Which faith except everyone do keep whole and undefiled, without doubt he shall perish everlastingly. And the Catholic faith is this, that we worship one God in Trinity, and Trinity in unity, neither confounding the persons nor dividing the substance.”

He says we worship one God in Trinity—three persons—and Trinity in unity—one God. Neither confounding the persons nor dividing the substance. The Father is not the Son, and the Son is not the Spirit. You cannot confound the persons. There are three distinct persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Nor can you divide the substance. You cannot say that God the Father is part God, God the Son is part God, and God the Holy Spirit is part God. You put them all three together, and you have one God. To divide them in that way is heresy. You cannot divide their persons, neither can you divide their substance or essence. They are of one essence.

Thus, we worship one God in Trinity, and Trinity in unity, neither confounding the persons nor dividing the substance. There is one person of the Father, another of the Son, and another of the Holy Spirit. But the Godhead of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit is all one, the glory equal, the majesty co-eternal. Such as the Father is, such is the Son, such is the Holy Spirit: the Father uncreated, the Son uncreated, and the Holy Spirit uncreated.

The Father incomprehensible, the Son incomprehensible, and the Holy Spirit incomprehensible. The Father eternal, the Son eternal, and the Holy Spirit eternal. Yet there are not three eternals, but one eternal. Also, there are not three incomprehensibles, but one incomprehensible. Nor three uncreated, but one uncreated and one incomprehensible. So likewise the Father is almighty, the Son almighty, the Holy Spirit almighty. Yet there are not three almighties, but one almighty. So the Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Spirit is God, yet there are not three gods, but one God. So likewise, the Father is Lord, the Son is Lord, the Holy Spirit is Lord, and yet there are not three lords, but one Lord.

When you understand, “Thou shalt have no other gods before me,” it is not only talking about the exclusiveness of God; it is also about the unity of God. There is just one God.

In John 14, verses 8 and 9, Philip makes this request: “Philip saith unto him, Lord, show us the Father, and it sufficeth us. Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? He that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Show us the Father?” The Father is not the

Son, the Son is not the Father, yet they are one. In John 10:30, our Lord makes this statement plainly: “I and my Father are one.”

So we have the exclusiveness of God and the unity of God. We also have the sovereignty of God: “Thou shalt have no other gods before me.” When we talk about the sovereignty of God, we are talking about the supremacy of God, that God is absolutely, totally supreme. As supreme and sovereign, He does as He pleases, only as He pleases, and always as He pleases, because He is God. Psalm 115:3 says, “But our God is in the heavens.

“He hath done whatsoever he hath pleased.” That is exactly what God does: whatever He pleases. This demonstrates that we are not God and will never be God, because we cannot always do as we please. Only God can do that. Daniel 4:35 says, “And all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing: and He doeth according to His will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay His hand, or say unto Him, What doest thou?” No one can stop, question, hinder, or thwart God in any way whatsoever, because God is sovereign.

When you look at the first commandment, “Thou shalt have no other gods before me,” you are not only considering the exclusiveness and unity of God, but also the sovereignty of God.

The Implied Promise: 'I Will Be Your God'

What kind of promise is implied in this? Stop and think about it. God says, “Thou shalt have no other gods before me.” If we have no other gods before Him, in conjunction with Him, or in subordination to Him, I believe the promise is clearly this: He will be our God, and we will be His people.

What was the ideal in the Old Testament turns out to be the reality in the New Testament. Consider what God said to the children of Israel in Exodus 6. He was about to bring them out of the land of Egypt. There were a number of reasons why God redeemed them, but one is revealed in verses 6 and 7: “Wherefore say unto the children of Israel, I am the Lord, and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will rid you out of their bondage, and I will redeem you with a stretched out arm, and with great

judgments: and I will take you to me for a people, and I will be to you a God: and ye shall know that I am the Lord your God, which bringeth you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians." God said, "I'm going to redeem you. And you're going to be to me a people. And I'm going to be to you your God."

"And you shall know me." Leviticus 26, verse 12, states it again. God says, "And I will walk among you, and will be your God, and ye shall be my people." He promises, "I will walk among you and will be your God and you shall be my people."

Jeremiah 7, verse 23, says, "But this thing commanded I them, saying, Obey my voice, and I will be your God, and ye shall be my people: and walk ye in all the ways that I have commanded you, that it may be well unto you." That is a promise right there. If you obey Him, it will be well unto you. But notice what He says: "Obey my voice, and I will be your God, and you shall be my people."

Jeremiah 11, verse 4, says, "Which I commanded your fathers in the day that I brought them forth out of the land of Egypt, from the iron furnace, saying, Obey my voice, and do them, according to all which I command you: so shall ye be my people, and I will be your God." Jeremiah 30, verse 22, states it simply: "And ye shall be my people, and I will be your God."

Keep this passage in Ezekiel in mind, because we are going to see a reference to it in the New Testament. Ezekiel 36, beginning with verse 26 and through verse 28, says, "A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them. And ye shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers; and ye shall be my people, and I will be your God." Now look carefully at verse 27.

New Testament Fulfillment in Christ

He said, "And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them." And then in verse 28, "And ye shall be my people, and I will be your God."

This is a double promise and a double blessing: God will be our God, and we will be His people.

What He promised in the Old Testament has become the truth and reality in the New Testament. Israel after the flesh did not keep God's law. He judged them over and over for violating that law. They claimed to be a covenant nation, and yet they forsook Him and His law repeatedly. But just as He delivered Israel from slavery and Egyptian bondage, so now, in grace and mercy, He's delivered us from ourselves and from our sins through Jesus Christ. He not only regenerated us, converted us, and saved us; He has made us His people, and we are now called by His name, Christians.

He is our God, our Savior, our Redeemer, our Lord, our Sovereign, and our Father. He provides for us, protects us, defends us, and preserves us. His providence rules over us; He loves us and has mercy upon us. As David said in Psalm 23 and verse 1, "The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want." One child paraphrased it this way: "The Lord is my shepherd and that's all I want." If the Lord is indeed your shepherd, that's all you need, for sure.

That which was intended as the ideal in the Old Testament has now become the fact and reality in the New Testament. In Ezekiel 36 He said, "I will put my spirit within you and I will cause you to walk in my statutes." This is a direct reference to Hebrews 8:10: "For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people: and they shall not teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest. For I

God said, “I will put my laws in their mind and write them in their hearts, and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people.” There will be no need to teach everyone, “Know the Lord,” because they shall all know Him. How shall we know Him? Because He writes His law in our hearts.

Hebrews 10:16 says, “This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them; and their sins and

iniquities will I remember no more." I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them.

Here is the promise of "Thou shalt have no other gods before me." If I have no other gods—nothing above, nothing beyond, nothing under, and nothing along with the one true and living God—then He is my God. The evidence that He is my God, and that I belong to Him, is that He has written His law in my heart and in my mind and has given me His Holy Spirit, which enables and causes me to obey.

I cannot help but love the law of God and obey—not perfectly, because we are all sinners, but the general tenor of our lives is obedience. He is my God, and the evidence that He is my God and that I am His is that He wrote His law in my heart and I obey Him. I confess Him, acknowledge Him, and acknowledge His Word.

Applications: Joy, Assurance, and Exclusive Worship

One God and one law reveals the truth of the First Commandment. If God is God—and He is—He is one, His law is one, and He says, "Here is how you will be identified as mine: I will write my laws in your heart and in your mind." If God is our God, we should want nothing else. Now let me make some applications. Listen carefully. The first one is this.

The promise and the thought of the exclusive triune sovereign God being our God should produce joy and rejoicing in our hearts and lives. Psalm 144:15 says, "Happy is that people, that is in such a case: yea, happy is that people, whose God is the Lord." He said it should produce joy and happiness because He is our God. Isaiah 25:9 says, "And it shall be said in that day, Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, and he will save us: this is the Lord; we have waited for him, we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation." If we understand that God is our God, it should cause great joy and happiness in our hearts.

The second application is this: Has the thought ever entered into your mind, or reached the depth of your own soul, that the sovereign God of heaven and earth is your God? Stop and think about that. He is our God.

Do you remember what our Lord said in John 17:3? "And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent." This is life eternal: that they may know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent. Eternal life is a personal, intimate relationship with God. Eternal life is personally knowing Him.

In John 14:21, our Lord said, "He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father. And I will love him, and will manifest myself to him." Judas asked how He would manifest Himself to them and not to the world. Jesus answered, "If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him. He that loveth me not keepeth not my sayings: and the word which ye hear is not mine, but the Father's which sent me." Whatever our Lord says, if you love Him, you are going to keep His commandments; and if you keep His commandments, He and the Father will come and make their abode with you. They will manifest themselves unto you.

You will know that the one true and the living God is your God. So, when God, by His Holy Spirit, enables you to obey and bring your life into conformity to the Word of God, that is just evidence. That is proof that the exclusive, triune, sovereign God of the Bible is your God. The reality of this should excite each one of us.

Based upon the fact that I am His and He is mine, I have complete assurance that He will never leave me or forsake me. The Bible says in Psalm 48:14, "For this God is our God for ever and ever: he will be our guide even unto death." Then Hebrews 13:5 says, "Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." Paul says in 2 Timothy 1:12, "For the which cause I also suffer these things: nevertheless I am not ashamed: for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day."

I am absolutely sure that He is my God and He will never let me down. I want to show you two other verses. I have basically used these two verses as a life verse for fifty years or better. They speak of assurance and of the fact that our God is able. Jude, the last book

right before Revelation, is a very short book. Jude 24 and 25 say, "Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen."

"Thou shalt have no other gods before me." If we have no other gods, worship Him, and obey Him in the way that He commands, the implied promise is that He will be our God and we will be His people. Have you ever stopped to think that the God of the Old Testament, the God of the New Testament, the God of the Bible, is our God?

And He does not change. Everything that He's promised, He is able to perform.

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we bow to Thee. We thank You for Your Word and for Your truth. Father, we do not want or desire any God except Thee, for we confess that Thou art God alone. Thou art the true God, the sovereign God, the exclusive God, and we bow before Thee in and through the person of the Lord Jesus Christ and the power of the Spirit. We worship Thee and give Thee all honor and glory and praise. Give us grace to serve Thee acceptably with reverence and godly fear. In Thy name we pray, Amen.

CHAPTER 9

Promises Of The Law

Part Nine

The Second Commandment

Introduction to the Second Commandment

God says: "Thou shalt not make thee any graven image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the waters beneath the earth: Thou shalt not bow down thyself unto them, nor serve them: for 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; And showing mercy unto thousands of them that love me and keep my commandments."

The first commandment is indeed a basic or fundamental commandment. If it is acknowledged and understood, then logically all of the other commandments should actually fall in place. After declaring in the first commandment who was the one true and the living God and that He alone should be worshiped, in the second

commandment He now tells you how He is to be worshipped. He gives us what will be His lawful worship and what will be unlawful.

Now, since God is absolutely sovereign, since God is God, He has the absolute right to tell us how He is to be worshipped. He has the right to tell us what is acceptable unto Him and what is unacceptable. Unacceptable worship is really not worship at all. It is rebellion. It is blasphemy. It is the way of Cain.

Unacceptable Worship as Rebellion

You remember in the book of Genesis, Abel brought the blood as was required of him, but Cain brought the fruit of the ground, that which he had made with his own hands. And Abel's was accepted and Cain's was not. And so anytime you deal with unacceptable worship, in one sense of the word, it is what the Bible calls the way of Cain.

The Danger of Images as Aids to Worship

Now, many people erroneously believe that they need aids in worship. By the term aids, I refer to images and statues and paintings. All of these things are kind of looked upon as an aid to help people really and truly worship God. However, the truth of the matter is the aids usually detract from God's worship. They usually lead us astray into that which is not really God at all. Because many times we use those paintings or we use those images or those statues and we form in our minds some concept of God which is totally and absolutely unbiblical and unscriptural.

A good illustration is the average picture of Jesus that is prominent today. He is looking away, with long brown hair. According to the Bible, Jesus Christ did not have long hair. First Corinthians chapter 14 tells us that if a man have long hair, it is a shame unto him. Obviously, our Lord is not going to do anything that would shame Himself or the Father. Moreover, when He was alive, Caesar was on the throne, and the Caesar cut was the rage. The Caesar cut, of course, was a very short hairstyle. Yet when people think about Jesus Christ, they usually picture that very familiar painting or drawing.

The Roman Catholic Omission of the Second Commandment

Oftentimes these paintings, statues, and images detract from the real worship of God. They certainly do not help. Anything condemned by God is unacceptable unto Him.

The Roman Catholic Church totally and completely leaves out the second commandment from its ten commandments. It takes the tenth commandment, divides it, and makes two out of it; but the second commandment as recorded in Exodus 20 and Deuteronomy 5 is not found in the commandments of the Roman Catholic Church. Obviously, if this commandment were preached and taught, it would not only destroy their teaching, but also an awful lot of their unacceptable worship. The Bible tells us very plainly that if God is God, He has the absolute right to tell us how He is to be worshipped.

The Scope of the Prohibition

When we are talking about the Second Commandment—"Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or in the earth beneath, or that in the waters beneath the earth"—I do not think this commandment is against art for art's sake. Nor do I believe it is against what we would simply call sculptures or sculpturing. There was an awful lot of art not only in the tabernacle, but in the temple as well. There were the cherubims, which were certainly what we would call molten, graven, or made somehow. And when we come to the temple, there was all of the artwork that was there.

In fact, God also commanded Moses to make the brazen serpent in the wilderness, which was held up so people could look at it. This commandment, then, is not necessarily condemning all art, sculptures, images, or anything of that kind. What it is indeed condemning is using those things as a means to worship. The ordinary carving of an animal or chiseling of something out of stone is not necessarily sin in itself. It is sin to take those things and use them as a means to worship God, which He condemns very clearly.

The Hebrew word for graven, when God said, "Thou shalt not make any graven image," literally means to hew, to carve, or to

grave. It signifies any kind of image—wood, stone, or metal—on which the ax, chisel, or graving tool has been employed.

Egyptian Idolatry as Background

This commandment includes the prohibition of practically everything that the Egyptians worshipped. Why would it be so specific against the things the Egyptians worshipped? The answer is that Israel was in Egypt for over 400 years. In that time, there was ample opportunity to absorb heathen thinking, culture, and methodology. God was being very specific: they were not to make anything graven.

Deuteronomy chapter 4, beginning with verse 12, says: "And the Lord spake unto you out of the midst of the fire: ye heard the voice of the words, but saw no similitude; only ye heard a voice." The Bible emphasizes that they saw no kind of image or form when God spoke; they simply heard the voice. Verse 13 continues: "And he declared unto you his covenant, which he commanded you to perform, even ten commandments; and he wrote them upon two tables of stone. And the Lord commanded me at that time to teach you statutes and judgments, that ye might do them"

"Take ye therefore good heed unto yourselves; for ye saw no manner of similitude on the day that the Lord spake unto you in Horeb out of the midst of the fire: Lest ye corrupt yourselves, and make you a graven image, the similitude of any figure, the likeness of male or female, The likeness of any beast that is on the earth, the likeness of any winged fowl that flieth in the air, The likeness of any thing that creepeth on the ground, the likeness of any fish that is in the waters beneath the earth: And lest thou lift up thine eyes unto heaven, and when thou seest the sun, and the moon, and the stars, even all the host of heaven, shouldest be driven to worship them, and serve them, which the Lord thy God hath divided unto all nations under the whole heaven."

Now God is very specific, especially in verses 16 through 18, about that which is absolutely forbidden. Adam Clarke comments on these verses and says: "To know the full spirit and extent of this commandment, that is the second commandment, we must take it in light of Deuteronomy chapter 4: 'Take good heed unto yourselves,

lest ye corrupt yourselves, and make you a graven image, the similitude of any figure, the likeness of male or female.'"

"All who have the slightest acquaintance with the ancient history of Egypt know that Osiris and his wife Isis were the supreme divinities among the people." Thus they had a male and a female as gods. He continues, explaining "the likeness of any beast," such as the ox or the heifer: "Among the Egyptians the ox was not only sacred but adored, because they supposed that in one of these animals Osiris took up his residence. Hence they always had a living ox, which they supposed to be the habitation of this deity. And they imagined that on the death of one he entered into the body of another, and so successively. This famous ox-god they called Apis and Mnevis." He adds: "'the likeness of any winged fowl,' the ibis, or the stork, or the crane, or the hawk, may here be intended, for all of these were objects of Egyptian idolatry."

The likeness of anything that creepeth included the crocodile, serpents, and the scarabaeus, or beetle, all of which were objects of adoration. It is very probable that the frog itself was a sacred animal, since its inflation was emblematic of prophetic influence. The Egyptians supposed that the god inflated or distended the body of the person by whom He gave oracular answers. The likeness of any fish was also forbidden. All fish were esteemed sacred animals among the Egyptians. One called Oxyrhynchus had, according to Strabo, a temple and divine honors paid to it. Another, called Phagrus, was worshipped at Cyrene, according to Clemens Alexandrinus. The Lepidotus, whatever this is, and the eel were objects of their adoration, as we find from Herodotus.

In short, oxen, heifers, sheep, goats, lions, dogs, monkeys, and cats; the ibis, the crane, and the hawk; the crocodile, serpents, frogs, flies, the scarabaeus or beetle; the Nile and its fish; the sun, moon, planets, stars; fire, light, air, darkness, and night were all subjects of Egyptian idolatry. All of this was included in the circumstantial prohibition detailed in Deuteronomy and very forcibly stated in the general terms: "Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or in the earth beneath, or in the water under the earth."

What He is doing in the Second Commandment is saying that anything found, or anything understood from Egypt, is verboten. It is forbidden; it is unacceptable. God will not have any worship that is pagan in its origin.

John Calvin, commenting on this, said that there are two parts to the commandment. The first forbids the erection of a graven image or any likeness. The second prohibits transferring the worship that God claims for Himself alone to any of these phantoms or delusive shows. Therefore, to devise any image of God is in itself impious, because by this corruption His Majesty is adulterated, and He is figured to be other than He is.

In other words, you and I cannot conceive images of God in our minds and think, “Well, this is the way God is.” The only God who exists is the God who has revealed Himself in the Bible, and He is exactly as He has revealed Himself. For us to think otherwise is absolutely idolatry. Remember that the word image comes from the word imagination. You cannot create an image unless you first imagine it in your mind.

So image comes from imagination. To give you an illustration of how far off our thinking normally is, years ago I was in a pastor friend's office, and we were talking about the doctrine of election. The door was standing wide open, and his secretary was right outside at her desk. We had just been rejoicing in the doctrine and talking about the doctrine of election when, all of a sudden, she barges into the room and into our conversation. She was so upset.

She said, "I don't care what the Bible says. I know God's not like that."

The pastor picked his jaw from the floor. He looked at her and said, "Did you hear what you just said?" In other words, her God was a god of her imagination. It was not the God of the Bible. She was unwilling to take what the Bible said, but she was willing to accept what she thought.

Now molten images, graven images, and idols have always been condemned throughout Scripture. Several passages make this clear. In Leviticus 19:4, God says, "Turn ye not unto idols, nor make to yourselves molten gods: I am the Lord your God." So He says, "Turn

ye not unto idols, nor make to yourselves molten gods." Again, in Leviticus 26:1, God says, "Ye shall make you no idols nor graven image, neither rear"

God forbids any graven image that can be worshipped or associated with worship to be reared up. In Joshua 24:20, Joshua told the people, "If ye forsake the Lord, and serve strange gods, then he will turn and do you hurt, and consume you, after that he hath done you good." In other words, do not turn away from the one true and living God and turn to idols.

Obviously, when you look at Deuteronomy chapter 5 and the Second Commandment, there are two promises attached here. We are talking about the promises of the law. After He tells you not to make any graven image, He says, "Thou shalt not bow down thyself unto them, nor serve them: for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God."

The Jealousy of God and the Promises

Here is a promise, and it is a threat—a negative sanction: "visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me." Here is the positive: "And showing mercy unto thousands of them that love me and keep my commandments."

God has promised to visit His vengeance, His justice, upon those who hate Him. He describes those who hate Him as those who will not honor Him, give Him glory, and worship Him in the way that He has declared. Here is the promise of judgment, the promise of divine vengeance on those who violate the Second Commandment. The second part of that promise is found in verse 10: "...and showing mercy unto thousands of them that love Me, and keep My commandments." If you love Him and keep His commandments, He promises that you will receive mercy.

Here is the point: you have a negative sanction, and you have a positive sanction. But here is the connection. Look back in verse 9: “Thou shalt not bow down thyself unto them, nor serve them”—and you can underline this—“for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God.” The reason for these promises, both negative and positive, is that they are connected to the jealousy of God.

I am not sure that you are aware of this, but I am going to show it to you in the Bible. One of the names of God in the Bible is Jealous. If you will look in your Bibles to the book of Exodus, chapter 34, and look at verse 14, you will see the term jealous used a number of times in Scripture. God says, “For thou shalt worship no other god: for the Lord, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God.” So one of the names of God in Scripture is Jealous, because He is a jealous God.

Turn right over to the book of Deuteronomy, chapter 6, right past our text, and look at verse 15. “For the Lord thy God is a jealous God among you, lest the anger of the Lord thy God be kindled against thee, and destroy thee from off the face of the earth.” So He says the Lord thy God is a jealous God. In fact, in the book of Nahum, chapter 1, verse 1, the Bible says, “God is jealous, and the Lord revengeth; the Lord revengeth, and is furious; the Lord will take vengeance on his adversaries.” But it begins, “The Lord is jealous.”

The name and the nature of God answer one to another, and God is not going to allow any competitors or rivals. When you look at all of the false gods—for instance, if you went to the Greek Parthenon and saw Diana, Juno, and someone else—all of these gods are competitors and have rivals, and they fight against each other. But God is not like that. God brooks absolutely no rivals. He is jealous of His worship. He is jealous of His honor, and He is jealous of His glory. This jealousy, as I am going to show you a little bit later, is actually a jealousy related to what you and I would call a marriage covenant.

SCRIPTURE READING - Exodus 34:10-17 (KJV)

God's Jealousy as a Marriage Covenant

In Exodus 34, having just read verse 14, which shows that the name of the Lord is Jealous, we now look at it in its context, beginning in verse 10:

"And he said, Behold, I make a covenant: before all thy people I will do marvels, such as have not been done in all the earth, nor in any nation: and all the people among which thou art shall see the work of the Lord: for it is a terrible thing that I will do with thee." He said, "I'm going to make a covenant with thee." God's

jealousy for His people is based upon His covenant, His covenant relationship with them.

"Observe thou that which I command thee this day: behold, I drive out before thee the Amorite, and the Canaanite, and the Hittite, and the Perizzite, and the Hivite, and the Jebusite. Take heed to thyself, lest thou make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land whither thou goest, lest it be for a snare in the midst of thee: But ye shall destroy their altars, break their images, and cut down their groves: For thou shalt worship no other god: for the Lord, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God: Lest thou make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land, and they go a whoring after their gods, and do sacrifice unto their gods, and one call thee, and thou eat of his sacrifice; And thou take of their daughters unto thy sons, and their daughters go a whoring after their gods, and make thy sons go a whoring after their gods. Thou shalt make thee no molten gods."

Now God says, when you come into the land, you destroy their altars, you cut down their images, you cut down their groves, and nothing. In other words, my worship is not like their worship. What did He say in Isaiah 42 and verse 8? "I am the Lord: that is my name: and my glory will I not give to another, neither my praise to graven images." God is indeed a jealous God.

Jealousy in Scripture is used both in a positive and a negative sense. When it is used in reference to God, it is positive because it is not only the name of God but also an attribute of God. The way to understand this is anthropomorphically. Anthropos is the Greek word for man, and morphe is the Greek word for form. Anthropomorphic simply means man-form speaking. As you read the Bible, you will find a lot of man-form speaking.

For instance, Proverbs 15 says, "The eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, beholding the evil and the good." God does not have eyes; God is spirit. This speaks of God's omniscience. When the Bible says He brought Israel out of Egypt by a mighty hand or stretched-out arm, that is anthropomorphic. God does not have a hand or arm as we have them, because God is spirit. This speaks of God's omnipotence and power.

When you understand God's jealousy here, the language is used in relationship to a covenantal relationship, like the relationship between a husband and his wife. God's jealousy is not only for His honor, glory, and worship; it is also for His people. His jealousy is spoken of repeatedly throughout the Bible. He is the jealous God, and He will not give His glory to another. He is jealous for His glory, honor, and worship. He will accept nothing except that which He has delineated.

He is jealous for His people as well. What did He say? "He that toucheth thee toucheth the apple of my eye." He rebuked kings for His people. He says, "Touch not mine anointed, and do my prophets no harm." God is indeed jealous over His people.

The jealousy of God points out how He is vigilant in protecting that which is His own. The difference between envy and jealousy is this: envy is when you desire and covet something that does not belong to you. You want it. Jealousy is when you protect that which does belong to you. If I protect my wife, I could be said to be jealous for my wife. I am not envious for her; I am jealous for her because I am going to protect her, and I am going to protect her honor as well.

So this is exactly what God is doing. Jealousy guards that which one does possess. God does possess honor, glory, His own worship, and His own people. He does possess honor; He does possess glory; He does possess His own worship; and He does possess His own people. The name Jealous, and the fact that God is a jealous God in terms of His worship, has reference to what you and I would call the marriage bed or the marriage covenant.

In Proverbs 6:34, the Bible says that jealousy is the rage of a man, and that the man will not be satisfied, though thou givest him many gifts. On the other hand, when the Bible talks about God's jealousy, it is a holy and just jealousy, where God is vigilantly guarding that which belongs to Him.

Let me give you a couple of statements, and I want you to ponder these. First of all, it is impossible to worship God aright if you do not worship God alone. It is impossible to worship God aright if you do not worship God alone. Secondly, it is impossible to worship God aright unless you worship Him in the manner that He dictates. There

is acceptable worship and unacceptable worship; lawful worship and unlawful worship. When God promises in the second commandment to take vengeance to the third and fourth generation of those who hate Him, it is in regard to His jealousy. When God promises to have mercy upon those that love Him and keep His commandments, it is in regard to His jealousy.

What we fail to remember is that we owe God every day, every hour, every minute, every second. Certainly, we should give Him His public worship, and we should also give Him His private worship. In 1 Chronicles 16:29, Scripture says, "Give unto the Lord the glory due unto his name. Bring an offering, and come before him: worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness."

“Give unto the Lord the glory due unto his name. Worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness.” Giving the Lord glory that is due unto His name is connected to worship. Psalm 29:2 says, “Give unto the Lord the glory due unto his name; worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness.” The command is stated in both passages, and the wording is practically the same: “Give unto the Lord the glory due unto his name.”

Psalm 96:8-9 says, “Give unto the Lord the glory due unto his name: bring an offering, and come into his courts. O worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness: fear before him, all the earth.” Psalm 96 then adds, “bring an offering, and come into his courts,” before calling all the earth to worship and fear before Him. Once again, worship is connected with giving the Lord the glory due unto His name.

We should be giving God praise, glory, and thanksgiving on a daily basis, sometimes on an hourly basis. It is my custom each morning when I awaken, before I ever get out of bed, to thank the Lord for allowing us to live through the night and to thank Him for the new day. When I go to bed at night, I thank Him for allowing us to live through the day and ask Him to protect us and continue His blessings through the night as we sleep.

Whenever we are driving down the road and I see a cross beside the road, knowing someone was killed there, I always thank the Lord for life. I thank Him for sparing my life and for sparing my wife's life.

I am simply saying that we miss so many opportunities to give God glory and to give God thanks.

Many of us have been in automobile wrecks. We have totaled our cars, but we were spared. I just received a prayer request this week concerning a family up north. An older couple had their grandchildren spending the night with them, and somehow their house caught fire. They were on the second story and had to open a window and jump into a snowbank to save their lives. The grandparents got out fine, as did the grandchildren, but the house and everything in it was utterly consumed. Of course, they were thankful just to be alive. It is a sad thing to lose everything you have worked for all your life, but at least you have your life.

This is what he is talking about: Give the Lord the glory due unto His name. A failure to give the Lord glory and worship is a provocation unto Him. Psalm 78 shows how these individuals provoked the Lord. Beginning with verse 55, it says: "He cast out the heathen also before them, and divided them an inheritance by line, and made the tribes of Israel to dwell in their tents. Yet they tempted and provoked the most high God." They tempted and provoked the most high God.

Provoking God through Unacceptable Worship

How did they tempt Him? How did they provoke Him? "And kept not his testimonies, but turned back, and dealt unfaithfully like their fathers: they were turned aside like a deceitful bow." Here it is: "For they provoked him to anger with their high places"—that is unacceptable worship—"and moved him to jealousy with their graven images." They provoked God by failing to give Him the worship, glory, and honor due unto Him.

The word provoked literally means to be rebellious, disobedient, grievous, refractory—a failure to show honor and respect. Here is God declaring Himself to be the jealous God: If you give Me My glory and worship Me, I promise to bless you and show you mercy. If you do not worship and honor Me, then I promise to judge you and exercise My wrath upon you. Now let me ask you a question: How many of you would be willing, if I provided a stick

That was six feet long, about an inch in diameter, and had a sharp point on the end of it. How many of you would be willing to go up to a full-grown grizzly bear or lion and poke him with the sharp end of that stick just to see what he would do? Stop and think about this. You pretty well know the outcome. I saw a cartoon I liked. It showed a big grizzly bear sitting on a stump, saying, "Campers and tents are nothing more than soft tacos to us."

That's kind of the truth. If you start poking a bear or a lion with a sharp stick, you're going to be like a soft taco, and you know it. If someone did that, we would say he was insane because we know the outcome. Yet people provoke God, hate Him, despise Him, and disobey Him. He is the omnipotent Sovereign of the universe, but they challenge God and dare Him to judge them and strike them. They would never do that with a lion or a bear, yet they are willing to do it with the God of heaven.

The jealousy of God is not only taught in the Old Testament; it is also taught in the New Testament. In 1 Corinthians 10, the Apostle Paul gives some very good counsel: "Wherefore, my dearly beloved, flee from idolatry." Run from it, get away from it. Do not engage in it or have anything to do with it. He continues, "I speak as to wise men; judge ye what I say." If you are wise, you are going to listen to him. Now watch verse 16: "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ?" We are talking about the Lord's table. "The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? For we being many are one bread, and one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread. Behold Israel after the flesh: are not they which eat of the sacrifices partakers of the altar? What say I then?"

Paul says that the things which the Gentiles—the unsaved, pagans, and heathen—sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils, and not to God. He would not have believers fellowship with devils: “Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of devils: ye cannot be partakers of the Lord's table, and of the table of devils.” Then comes the question: “Do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? are we stronger than he?”

Do you want to play around with God, challenge Him, worship Him partially while worshiping something else partially? No! It is

totally wicked and vile, and it is just as wrong to provoke God in the New Testament as it was to provoke Him in the Old Testament.

John Gill, the great Baptist commentator, said, “To give in to idolatrous practices is to proclaim and enter into a war against God. And what madness must this be? Who can be so sottish and stupid as to think of succeeding, when God is omnipotent, and man a poor, feeble, impotent creature, a worm, and but dust and ashes? Thus the apostle dissuades from idolatry, and every species and branch of it, partly from its ill effect in bringing men into fellowship with devils, and partly from the impossibility of practicing it in consistence with the real and true participation of the cup and table of the Lord. And from the absurdity and stupidity of it and its dangerous consequence, in exposing men to the vengeance of an almighty incensed being.” Do you want to provoke God and find out what an angry God really is?

Charles Haddon Spurgeon tied the jealousy of God to the second commandment: “The covenant of grace is a marriage covenant. Christ's Church has become His spouse.” We have been married to Jesus Christ; we are His spouse, according to the Apostle Paul. Spurgeon continued, “It is here that God's jealousy is peculiarly liable to take fire. Men cannot be God's favorites without being the subjects of His watchfulness and jealousy. That which might be overlooked in another will be chastened in a member of Christ. As a husband is jealous of his honor, so is the Lord Jesus much concerned for the purity of His church.”

Moses, in Psalm 90:11, said, "Who knoweth the power of thine anger? even according to thy fear, so is thy wrath." The interesting thing is that when the Bible talks about earthquakes and all kinds of catastrophes, it says this is but the hiding of His power. It is not the full demonstration; it is just the hiding of His power.

Do you realize it is just as possible to provoke God in the New Testament as it was to provoke Him in the Old Testament? Hebrews 3:8 says, "Harden not your hearts, as in the provocation"—speaking of what we read in Psalm 78—"in the day of temptation in the wilderness." Then verse 15 says, "While it is said, To day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation." Harden not your hearts, as in the day of provocation.

The word harden is from the Greek word skleruno, and it literally means to make hard, to make obstinate, to be stubborn, or to be insolent. This is the same Greek word from which we get our English word sclerosis, the hardening of the arteries. He says, "Harden not your hearts, as in the day of provocation." It is possible for a Christian to harden his heart.

I preached not too long ago in two messages on hardened hearts. Our Lord looked at His apostles and said, "Have ye your heart yet hardened?" So obviously it is possible for a Christian to become insolent, stubborn, and obstinate.

Let me give you an illustration. I have counseled a lot of people, and inevitably someone comes up with something like this. I would say, "Now the Bible says..." and then hear, "I don't care." Then I would say, "Now God says..." and hear again, "I don't care." I would stop and ask, "You mean you don't really care what God says? You don't care what the Bible says?" What that means is that you have a hardened heart. What that means is that you are in far more trouble than you could ever imagine, because God has said, "Harden not your hearts."

A hardened heart is inconsiderate, unthinking, uncaring, and rebellious. When you stop and think about the adulterer, the adulterer only cares for himself.

He cares not for his spouse. It is the same truth in relationship to God. When we render unto God the kind of worship that we want Him to have, we are caring only for ourselves. People say, "But this makes me feel good." Worship is not designed to make you feel good. Worship is designed to give God the honor and glory that is due unto His name, whether you feel anything or not. Worship is not about you. It is about God.

All idolatry in the Bible is usually represented as spiritual adultery or spiritual fornication. It is giving the heart to sin and wickedness when the heart should be dedicated to God. What made the sin of Israel so grievous was that they were in a covenantal relationship with God. They had promised Him their heart, their love, and their worship, and they rebelled against Him.

What makes it so grievous in the New Testament is that we have been purchased with the blood of Jesus Christ. We have been bought by His person and His work. We have entered into a covenant with Him and promised to give Him our hearts, our love, and our obedience. Then we turn and give it to something else. No wonder God is said to be a jealous God. If your wife promised to be faithful to you and then went with every man in town, you would be mighty upset. Wives would be the same if your husband promised to be faithful, then ran off with every other woman.

Applications and Conclusion

If you really want to comprehend the second commandment, then you must comprehend and understand the jealousy of God. The jealousy of God is truly expressing His love and His affection for His people. He is saying, in essence, "I love you so much that I am unwilling to be deprived of your affection and your honor and your worship. I want it." Therefore God is jealous over us with a godly jealousy.

If we love Him, we must give Him the worship, praise, honor, and glory that are due unto His name. When you look at the second commandment, there are promises. God is saying, if you do not worship Me as the one true and living God, and do not worship Me the way that I dictate, I promise that I will judge you. But if you worship Me as the one true and living God, and give Me that which I ask for, I promise there will be mercy and grace.

The second commandment is easily understood if you understand the jealousy of God. God is jealous. His name is Jealous.

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we do bow before Thee. We thank You for Your word and truth. We thank You, Heavenly Father, that Thou art the one true and living God. We ask You today, Lord, that You would help and enable us to give Thee the glory, worship, and honor due unto Thy great and holy name. May we not forget Thee or provoke Thee, but honor Thee. Father, we ask in the name of Jesus Christ that Thou wouldst spring our lives in submission unto Thee, and help us, Lord, to render unto Thee our love, affection, and thanks. In the name of Jesus Christ, we ask and pray. Amen.

CHAPTER 10

Promises Of The Law

Part Ten

Introduction and Review of the Second Commandment

Deuteronomy chapter 5, verses 8 through 10. Deuteronomy 5, verses 8 through 10. We are on the second commandment. Last week I dealt with part 9, which was the first part on the second commandment. Today this is number 10. It is the second part and concluding part on the second commandment. So notice, if you would please, Deuteronomy 5, beginning there with verse 8. God says, "Thou shalt not make thee any graven image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the waters beneath the earth. Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them."

"For I, the Lord thy God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children of the third and fourth generation of them that hate me, and showing mercy unto thousands of them that love me and keep my commandments." Let me very quickly just review for a few moments on the first part of this. The first

commandment, of course, commands us to worship God alone. He is the true and the living God, and there's absolutely none beside Him. In fact, we looked at a number of scriptures where He said, "I am the Lord. There is none else." And certainly, in this commandment, the first commandment, we are commanded to worship Him and worship Him alone. In the second commandment, God also explicitly tells us how not to worship Him.

We are not to worship Him with any graven image or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above or in the earth beneath or that is in the waters under the earth. And then He tells us why. Because in verse 9 He tells us that He is a jealous God. In fact, the truth of the matter is, I showed you last week where one of the names of God is jealous. And I pointed out how God is jealous for His honor. He's jealous for His worship. He's jealous for His glory. He's jealous for His people. And God's jealousy just demonstrates the fact that He is vigilant in guarding that which belongs to Himself. I pointed out also that envy always desires that which does not belong to you, but jealousy is indeed, in one sense of the word, a very godly attribute and a very biblical attribute. There is in our lifetimes, yes, humanistic jealousy which is unbiblical and sinful, but there is indeed a biblical jealousy. And when you hear jealousy in reference to God, obviously that is a holy, just, and righteous, and pure jealousy.

So there is no sin or evil in jealousy in the biblical sense. We are the ones in our sinful nature who make it sinful as well. So God is saying that He is to be worshipped in the way that He commands and in the way that He demands.

It is impossible to worship God aright unless you worship God alone. Secondly, it is impossible to worship God aright unless you worship Him in the way that He commands you to worship Him. God has the absolute right to tell us how to worship.

The sanctions listed in verses 9 and 10 are both negative and positive. The negative sanction is that God always judges those who do not render to Him the worship that He deserves, unto the third and fourth generation of those that hate Him. He also issues a positive sanction, that is, He tells you that there will be blessings that follow those who obey Him and give Him the worship that is due

unto Him. Thus, God declares both the judgment that follows disobedience and the blessing that follows obedience.

The Generational Consequences of Idolatry

When you stop and think about the curse and judgment of God being upon the children to the third and fourth generation of those that hate Him, you have to remember that children usually act like their fathers. They take on the attitude as well as disposition of their fathers. They do not merely repeat the outward actions of their fathers; they take on their attitude and disposition. Sometimes you will find that the children are worse than the fathers.

For instance, in 1 Kings 14:22, the Bible says concerning Judah: "And Judah did evil in the sight of the Lord, and they provoked him to jealousy with their sins, which they had committed above all that their fathers had done." So the descendants did worse than the fathers. The fathers sinned; their descendants did worse than they.

In 2 Kings 15:9, you read about Zechariah, who was the son of Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, and was a very wicked man as well. The Bible says: "And he did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord, as his fathers had done: he departed not from the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin." And so usually you will find it.

Wickedness, rebellion, and hatred of God will go from father to son to grandson. It is simply handed down—the wickedness, the rebellion, and the hatred of God. The interesting thing is that when you read the books of Ezra and Daniel, both of these men confessed not only their own sins, but the sins of their people and the sins of their nation. In Daniel 9:16, Daniel prayed, "O Lord, according to all Thy righteousness, I beseech Thee, let Thine anger and Thy fury be turned away from the city of Jerusalem, the holy mountain, because of our sins and of the iniquities of our fathers. Jerusalem and my people are become a reproach to all that are about us." So here he was confessing the fact that they sinned just as their fathers had sinned as well. Thus God says His judgments will extend to the third and fourth generation of those who hate Him. By implication, His blessings will also extend to the third and fourth generations of those

who obey Him and give Him the worship that is rendered and that He demands to be rendered unto Him.

You have to understand that in the second commandment there are promises, and these promises involve sanctions: the negative sanctions, their curses, and the positive sanctions, the blessings. If you look back in Deuteronomy chapter 5, verse 8 says, "Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image of anything that is in heaven or in the earth or in the water or under the water." The truth is that we should never think in any way that there can be an image in reference to God. Obviously, you cannot think of an image in reference to God; I am talking about a graven image.

The Absurdity of Material Images of God

The Apostle Paul had been preaching on Mars Hill, and in Acts 17:29 he says, "Forasmuch then as we are the offspring of God"—that is, the children, creatures, and creation of God—"we ought not to think that the Godhead is likened to gold or silver, stone, graven by art and man's device." Now, let me give you two quotes.

Albert Barnes says, "Since we are formed by God, since we are like him, living, intelligent beings, since we are more excellent in our nature than the most precious and ingenious works of art, it is absurd to suppose that the original source of our existence can be like gold and silver and stone. Man himself is far more excellent than an image of wood or stone. How much more excellent still must be the great fountain and source of all of our wisdom and intelligence?"

If man himself is greater than images of gold, silver, and stone, how much greater is the God who created us? How stupid it would be to compare Him to a graven image or anything like that.

Adam Clarke goes further: "If we are the offspring of God, He cannot be like those images of gold, silver, and stone, which are formed by art and by the device of man. For the parent must resemble his offspring. Seeing therefore that we are living, intelligent beings, He from whom we have derived that being must be living and intelligent. It is necessary also that the object of religious worship should be much more excellent than the worshiper. But a man is by innumerable degrees more excellent than

an image made out of gold or silver or stone. And yet it would be impious to worship a man. How much more so to worship these images of God?"

The truth is that Christians are generally ignorant of the Bible. Not only are they ignorant of the Bible, they are irrational in their thinking about God and His worship. It is like the story I heard many years ago about a little girl in Sunday school. She was drawing and coloring, and the teacher asked what she was drawing. She said, "I'm drawing a picture of God." The teacher said, "But no one knows what God looks like." The little girl replied, "They will when I get through."

That is the way most Christians are, because they worship some god of their imagination instead of the God of the Bible. They suppose things about God that are totally, absolutely untrue, and many times refuse to accept what the Bible reveals about Him. It is absurd to think that God can be made out of anything material.

SCRIPTURE READING - Isaiah 40:12-27 (KJV)

God's Transcendence and Incomparability

If you think that God can be resembled, or compared, or made out of anything that is material, then you really don't understand the nature of God. Isaiah 40, beginning there with verse 12:

"Who hath measured the waters in the hollow of his hand, and meted out heaven with the span, and comprehended the dust of the earth in a measure, and weighed the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance? Who hath directed the Spirit of the Lord, being his counselor, hath taught him? With whom took he counsel, and who instructed him, and taught him in the path of judgment, and taught him knowledge, and showed to him the way of understanding?"

"Behold, the nations are as a drop of a bucket, and are counted as the small dust of the balance: behold, he taketh up the isles as a very little thing. And Lebanon is not sufficient to burn, nor the beasts thereof sufficient for a burnt offering. All nations

> before him are as nothing; and they are counted to him less than nothing, and vanity."
>
> Here's the question now, in light of all of this. "To whom then will ye liken God? Or what likeness will ye compare unto him? The workman melteth a graven image, and the goldsmith spreadeth it over with gold, and casteth silver chains. He that is so impoverished that he hath no oblation chooseth a tree that will not rot; he seeketh unto him a cunning workman to prepare a graven image, that shall not be moved. Have ye not known? Have ye not heard? Hath it not been told you from the beginning? Have ye not understood from the foundations of the earth? It is he"—that is God—"that sitteth upon the circle of the earth, and the inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers; that stretcheth out the heavens as a curtain, and spreadeth them out as a tent to dwell in: that bringeth the princes to nothing; he maketh the judges of the earth as vanity. Yea, they shall not be planted; yea, they shall not be sown: yea, their stock shall not take root in the earth: and he shall also blow upon them, and they shall wither, and the whirlwind shall take

The Holy One brings the nations away as stubble. “To whom then will ye liken me, or shall I be equal? saith the Holy One.” Lift up your eyes on high, and behold who hath created these things, that bringeth out their host by number: he calleth them all by names by the greatness of his power, for he is strong in power; not one faileth. Why sayest thou, O Jacob, and speakest, O Israel, “My way is hid from the Lord, and my judgment is passed over from my God”?

What is God telling us? He is the most transcendent being; that is, He transcends His creation. He is not only transcendent, but spiritual, unique, sovereign, and incomparable. There is absolutely nothing that can compare to God, and nothing can be made that would be like unto God.

Isaiah asks the question again: “To whom will ye liken me, and make me equal, and compare me, that we may be like?” If you were to ask me, “What is God like?” I have no answer, because there is nothing I can compare God unto. He is unique. “To whom will ye liken me, and make me equal, and compare me, that we may be like?” They lavish gold out of the bag, and weigh silver in the

balance, and hire a goldsmith; and he maketh it a god: they fall down.

They worship. They bear him upon the shoulder, they carry him, and set him up in his place, and he standeth; from his place shall he not remove: yea, one shall cry unto him, yet can he not answer, nor save him out of his trouble. Remember this, and show yourselves men: bring it again to mind, O ye transgressors. Remember the former things of old: for I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me, declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure: calling a ravenous bird from the east, the man that executeth my counsel from a far country: yea, I have spoken it, I will also bring it to pass; I have purposed it, I will also do it. Hearken unto me, ye stouthearted, that are far from righteousness.

God is asking, "To whom will ye liken me? To whom will ye make me equal, or compare me, that we may be alike?" God is unique. God is incomparable. One of the problems with images and pictures and statues is that there is no way they can represent God, because God is incomparable. There is none like unto Him.

Psalm 50, verse 7, says: "Hear, O my people, and I will speak; O Israel, and I will testify against thee: I am God, even thy God. I will not reprove thee for thy sacrifices or thy burnt offerings, to have been continually before me. I will take no bullock out of thy house, nor he goats out of thy folds. For every beast of the forest is mine, and the cattle upon a thousand hills. I know all the fowls of the mountains: and the wild beasts of the field are mine. If I were hungry, I would not tell thee: for the world is mine, and the fullness thereof."

Do you realize what He said? "The world is mine, and the fullness thereof."

God created everything that exists, which means God is greater than His creation. If you took everything in creation and tried to make a likeness to God, you would not have enough materials, because God is greater than His creation. If you try to represent God

by a statue, a graven image, or some other type of representation, you are going to run out of materials.

Look in Psalm 115. He keeps saying, “I am God and God alone,” and of course there are plenty of false gods. He mentioned this also in Isaiah chapter 40, but I want you to see it in Psalm 115. Think of all the idols that exist in churches—not just particularly in the Roman Catholic Church, where there are idols for sure, but in many churches. I am afraid there are idols even in Baptist churches. Think also of Hinduism, Buddhism, and all the other religions where they have their idols sitting there.

Look what God says, beginning with verse 1: “Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory, for thy mercy, and for thy truth's sake. Wherefore should the heathen say, Where is now their God?” Now look at the answer: “our God is in the heavens: he hath done whatsoever he hath pleased.” Our God is the true God, the sovereign God. He is in the heavens, and He does whatsoever He pleases. But look at verse 4: “Their idols”—we are talking about the heathen—“their idols are silver and gold, the work of men's hands. They have mouths, but they speak not: eyes have they, but they see not.”

They have ears, but they hear not: noses have they, but they smell not: they have hands, but they handle not: feet have they, but they walk not: neither speak they through their throat. Here it is: “They that make them are like unto them; so is every one that trusteth in them.” What is an idol? It is dead, dumb, and worthless. They cannot speak. They cannot hear. They cannot walk. They cannot work. They cannot deliver. They cannot save. And He said, “Whoever makes them and whoever trusts them are like unto them.” Thus the maker and the worshiper alike become like the idol they trust.

Obviously, you cannot make an image of God. If you try to represent God in an image, it is because you do not understand the nature of God. In Colossians 1, we are talking about Jesus Christ: “In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins.” Then Scripture says, “Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature.” Jesus Christ is God in the flesh. In Him we have redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of sins. He is the image of the invisible God.

The Invisibility of God and the Image of Christ

You remember in John 14, it was Philip who said, “Show us the Father, and it sufficeth us.” Jesus answered Philip, “Have I been so long with you, and yet you have not known me? He that has seen me has seen the Father.” Jesus Christ is indeed the One who is the image of the invisible God. He makes the invisible God known, not as a lifeless image made by human hands, but as God in the flesh.

First Timothy 1:17 gives this adoration: “Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honor and glory for ever and ever. Amen.” Now, if God is invisible, how are you going to make a visible image of Him? It is impossible. It is absolutely impossible. God by nature is invisible. God is spirit, and therefore God has no bodily form. God cannot be contained in a space or any space.

Even when Solomon was dedicating the temple, when he prayed in 1 Kings chapter 8, he said, “This house cannot contain thee; even the heavens of heavens cannot contain thee.” God is over and above and beyond His creation. He may be seen in creation, but He is over and above and beyond it. And the truth of the matter is this.

Internal Idolatry and Mental Images

The second commandment prohibits every species of idolatry, whether external or internal. Internal idolatry is just as wicked as external idolatry. Images begin in the imagination. Cars do not begin in Detroit or Toledo, Ohio, or wherever the car factories are now. Cars begin in the mind of an engineer. He draws it; the factories just build it. Our images stem from our imaginations. Therefore, wrong, wicked, and unbiblical imaginations about God are just as wicked and idolatrous as bowing down to an idol, because God is spirit and God is the invisible God.

Simply trying to picture God or Jesus Christ in your mind as you pray or worship is equally idolatrous. Not only do we not know what God looks like; we do not know what Jesus Christ looks like. Nearly every church building has this picture of Jesus with long, brown, flowing hair and a serene look as He gazes off to one side. That is not Jesus Christ; it is some artist's conception of Christ. Jesus Christ did

not have long hair, because 1 Corinthians 11:14 says, "Does not even nature itself teach you that, if a man have long hair, it is a shame to him?"

The Greek word for shame is atimia, which means dishonor; it means vile, disgrace, shame, and reproach. Jesus Christ did not have long hair. He did not look like a woman. They had barbers in those days, and they had barbers in the Old Testament.

Bob Jones University has an art gallery. I have been in that art gallery numerous times. There are beautiful paintings, hundreds of years old, by different kinds of artists. But if a Flemish artist paints a picture of Jesus Christ, He looks Flemish. If an Italian artist paints a picture of Jesus Christ, He looks Italian. If a Greek artist paints a picture of Jesus Christ, He looks Greek. Every picture that we have is nothing more than an artist's conception or imagination of what he thinks Jesus Christ looks like.

When you are trying to pray and form some mental image in your mind, that is idolatry. Mental images are just as much a violation of the second commandment as carved, graven, and molten images.

We had two promises in the Second Commandment. The first was a judgment or curse upon those who refused to give God the worship that He demanded. The second was His blessing upon those who did give Him the worship that He demanded. But I believe there is another promise clearly implied in the Second Commandment. God says, "Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image of any things in heaven above or in earth or in the water or underneath the water. Thou shalt not bow down to them. Thou shalt not serve them." If we take God's Word at face value and give Him the worship that He demands, an implied promise is that we will begin to grasp, see, and understand to some degree the nature of God.

Spiritual Worship Required

Since God is immaterial, incorporeal, and does not have a body, since God is spirit, if we reject all materialistic worship of God, then that only leaves that which is spiritual. In John 4, Jesus Christ is witnessing to the woman of Samaria. She says to Him, "I perceive that thou art a prophet. Our fathers worshiped in this

mountain"—that is Mount Gerizim—"but you say that in Jerusalem is the proper place to worship. Where should we worship?" Jesus Christ says, "Believe me, the hour is coming and now is when you shall neither in this mountain nor in Jerusalem worship God the Father." Then He says, "But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshipers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship Him.

God is spirit: and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth. So God is spirit, pure spirit with no bodily parts. He is incorporeal. When the Bible speaks of bodily parts in reference to God, it is what we would call anthropomorphically speaking. Anthropos is the Greek word for man, and morphe is the Greek word for form. Anthropomorphic simply means man-form speaking.

When the Bible says, “The eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth,” it is speaking of God’s omniscience. God does not have eyes the way we have eyes. When the Bible speaks of God’s hand and God’s arm, it is speaking of His omnipotence, His power, because God is spirit. He does not have bodily parts.

John 4 and verse 24 says: “God is spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.” Albert Barnes says: “By this is meant that God is without a body; that he is not material or composed of parts; that he is invisible, in every place, pure and holy. This is one of the first truths of religion, and one of the sublimest ever presented to the mind of man. Almost all nations have had some idea of God as gross or material, but the Bible declares that He is pure spirit. As he is such a spirit, he dwells not in temples made with hands (Acts 7:48), neither is worship with men’s hands, as though he needed anything, seeing he giveth all life and breath in all things (Acts 17:25). A pure, a holy, a spiritual worship, therefore, is such as he seeks—the offering of the soul, rather than the formal offering of the body; the homage of the heart, rather than that of the lips.”

Since God is spirit, He is interested in spiritual worship. Matthew Poole says:

“God is not a corporeal being made up of blood and flesh and bones, having senses as bodies do, to be pleased with sensible things,

but he is a spiritual being, the father of spirits, and requireth a spiritual service proportioned to his being. Therefore those that pay a religious homage to him must do it with their spirits, and according to the rule that he has prescribed, in truth and reality. This is now the will of God. Though he required of his people under the law a more ritual, figurative service, that is now to cease. Therefore the woman of Samaria need not trouble herself which was the truest worship, that at Mount Gerizim or Mount Zion, for both were very suddenly to terminate, and a new and more substantial spiritual worship was to succeed or follow."

"To the learning of the way and method of which she was more to attend, and not to spend her thoughts about these things, which were of no significance and tended only to minister questions of no use or of no value." So our Lord in John chapter 4 says, "Look, all of this materialism is coming to an end."

God ordained the worship in the Old Testament. He ordained the worship in the tabernacle and in the temple. He prescribed the feasts, the days of solemnity, the festivals, the music—everything. Since God prescribed all of this worship, why did God hate and despise their worship?

Oh, yes. Look in Isaiah chapter 1, beginning with verse 10. The reason God rejected their worship was that they left their heart and their spirit out, turning everything into ceremonies and rituals. God says, "Hear the word of the Lord, ye rulers of Sodom; give ear unto the law of our God, ye people of Gomorrah." To whom is He speaking? Verse 1 says, "The vision of Isaiah the son of Amoz, which he saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem." He is speaking about Judah and Jerusalem, yet He is calling them Sodom and Gomorrah.

Now verse 11: "To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? saith the Lord. I am full of the burnt offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts; and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he goats. When ye come to appear before me, who hath required this at your hand, to tread my courts? Bring no more vain"—that is, useless and worthless—"oblations; incense is an abomination unto me; the new moons and sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot away with; it is iniquity, even the solemn

meeting. Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hateth: they are a trouble unto me;"

“I am weary to bear them. And when ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you: yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear: your hands are full of blood.”

God appointed all of these rituals and ceremonies. But now He says, “I hate them. I despise them.” Why? Because their heart was not in their worship. They reduced the worship of God to a ceremony and a ritual, leaving the true worship of God out.

In Amos chapter 5, beginning with verse 21, God says, “I hate, I despise your feast days, and I will not smell in your solemn assemblies. Though ye offer me burnt offerings and your meat offerings, I will not accept them: neither will I regard the peace offerings of your fat beasts. Take thou away from me the noise of thy songs; for I will not hear the melody of thy viols. But let judgment run down as waters, and righteousness as a mighty stream. Have ye offered unto me sacrifices and offerings in the wilderness forty years, O house of Israel? No, but ye have borne the tabernacle of your Moloch and Chiun your images, the star of your god, which ye made to yourselves. Therefore will I cause you to go into captivity beyond Damascus, saith the Lord, whose name is The God of hosts.”

God said, “I hate, I despise your feast days. And I'm not going to smell in your solemn assemblies.” It is true that God appointed the solemn assemblies, the burnt offerings, and the music. But now God said, “I hate it, I despise it, I will not have it.” Why? Isaiah 29:13 tells you exactly why God hates and will not have this worship: “Wherefore the Lord said, Forasmuch as this people draw near me with their mouth, and with their lips do honour me, but have removed their heart far from me, and their fear toward me is taught by the precept of men.” God said, “They talk a good

That's why He says, "Let righteousness run down like rivers." You're living a lie. You're saying you love me. You're saying you're my people. You're saying that you worship me, but you're not. Your heart is far from me. Your spirit is not involved in my worship.

Just to show you how applicable this passage is today, our Lord quotes Isaiah 29:13 twice in the New Testament. In Matthew 15:8,

He said, "This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me." In Mark 7:6, He answered and said unto them, "Well hath Isaiah prophesied of you hypocrites, as it is written, This people honoureth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me."

So here's my question: Has anything changed? Is it any different today? The answer is no, because in the average church now, everything is mapped out to the nth degree. You have your programs, your plays, your schemes, whatever happens to run through the mind of man. And you give God everything except that which He demands.

The average Christian—I'm serious—believes that once he goes to church on Sunday, sings a few hymns, throws a few Federal Reserve notes in the offering, listens to a fifteen- or twenty-minute sermonette, and gets up and goes home, he has somehow worshipped God. He doesn't even think of God until the next Sunday again. Everything is canned. Everything is ritual.

Years ago, when there was a hurricane coming through Florida, Alice and I went down because one of our daughters lived in Tampa at the time. We went to help them prepare, and our son-in-law took us out to dinner. We passed a Baptist church with this sign: "Come to our early service: in by 8, out by 8:30."

That's exactly what it said. Salving the conscience of people on their way to spend the day on the beach, I can assure you, that's what it was. You know as well as I do, if you sing two or three songs, that's ten minutes. Every Baptist church is going to take an offering. If you have a beginning prayer and an ending prayer, that leaves about five minutes for a little sermonette—ten at the most. And people think, "Well, that's worshiping God." No, no. Since God is spirit, the only acceptable way to worship God is in and through the Holy Spirit in our spirit.

What did He say in John 4 and verse 24? "God is spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth." In other words, the true worship of God is bounded on one side by spirit and on the other side by truth. It is not that we can take our spirits and simply let them do what we want to do. We can hoo-hoo, holler, rant,

rave, and do all kinds of things. No. The Spirit is bounded by truth. It has got to be Spirit and truth.

If there is no spiritual worship, there is no worship. If there is no worship in truth, there is no worship. The only worship acceptable unto God is that which is done in spirit and in truth. And notice the next word in that verse: "they that worship him must worship him in spirit and truth." Spiritual and truthful worship is an absolute necessity in giving God that which He demands in worship. We cannot sit around like knots on a log, unthinking, uninvolved, and unwilling in worship.

Our minds are to be engaged, and our spirits are to be engaged. We are to be active in giving God spiritual worship. Turn to Psalm 103. This is an excellent illustration of what I am talking about. Begin reading with verse 1. David says, "Bless the Lord, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless his holy name." When he says, "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me," his mind, soul, spirit—everything—is involved. Then, in verse 2, he says, "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits." As we worship the Lord, we do not forget His benefits or His blessings. Our minds are active, and we are ascribing praise and honor to Him. Psalm 50:23 says, "Whoso offereth praise glorifieth me."

You may say, "Well, I can't think of too many benefits." You are alive, aren't you? You are healthy, aren't you? But in case you cannot think of many, David lists them in verse 3: "Who forgiveth all thine iniquities." Isn't that wonderful? David said, "Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin. Blessed is the man whose iniquities are covered." We can thank the Lord for His forgiveness.

"Who healeth all thy diseases." Every one of us has been sick and have gotten well. Then he says, "Who redeemeth thy life from destruction." Look how many times God has spared our lives. "Who crowneth thee with lovingkindness and tender mercies; who satisfieth thy mouth with good things; so that thy youth is renewed like the eagle's." In other words, David says, "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless his holy name." When we worship God, our minds are engaged. Our spirits are active, thanking Him for all His benefits and blessings.

Application: Pleasing God with True Worship

If we are obedient to the Second Commandment, then to some degree we will understand and comprehend the nature of God. God is Spirit. The more we render spiritual worship to Him, the more our understanding will increase, and the more we will be satisfied and He will be satisfied. We cannot have mental images of God in our mind any more than we can have graven images of God in our home. Both are equally idolatrous.

Has it ever entered into your mind that God may be hating and despising your worship? If He hated and despised that which His covenant people in the Old Testament gave Him because they did not give Him spiritual worship, and since God does not change, He hates the same in His people in the New Covenant. We need to give God the glory and praise due unto His name in the Holy Spirit, through the Holy Spirit, in our spirits, with our minds active and engaged, giving Him honor and glory and worship.

Without having a graven image or a mental image, we bow to Him according to that which He has revealed in His Word. It would be wonderful to give God that which He demands, deserves, and which pleases Him—to know, "What I have done today has been pleasing to my Heavenly Father."

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we bow to Thee. We thank You for Your Word and truth, and pray that You would help us understand and comprehend to some degree the nature of God. God is spirit, and we must worship Thee in spirit and in truth. Help us to do so for Your honor and glory and for our good. Through the Lord Jesus Christ, in whose name we pray, amen.

CHAPTER 11

Promises Of The Law

Part 11

The Third Commandment

Introduction and Review of First Two Commandments

Deuteronomy 5:11 says, “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.” This is message number 11 in the series “The Promises of the Law,” and we are dealing with the third commandment.

By way of review, we have covered the first two commandments. The first commandment contains the inherent and implied promise that if we have no other gods before Him, above Him, under Him, or equal unto Him, He will be our God and we will be His people. That promise is connected directly with our refusing every rival claim upon our worship and allegiance; the commandment itself identifies the condition under which God promises to be our God.

When we looked at the second commandment, we found two promises, or at least a promise of a two-fold nature. The first was negative sanctions, because He said that He would visit the iniquity to the third and fourth generation of those that hated Him. If we go into idolatry, that curse falls upon us. The positive sanction is also implied very clearly: those will be blessed if they do not fall into idolatry and honor Him the way He demands. The second commandment therefore sets before us both the consequence of hatred expressed in idolatry and the blessing associated with refusing it.

We also have to grasp, in some degree, the nature of God. If we understand that we are not to make any graven image of any kind, we must understand the spirituality of God. God is incorporeal; that is, He does not have a body. The Bible uses anthropomorphic terms, but God is not to be represented by a physical image.

"Anthropos" is the Greek word for man, and "morphe" is the Greek word for form. Thus, anthropomorphic simply means man-form speaking. When we read that the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, beholding the evil and the good, God does not have eyes, because God is spirit. This is an anthropomorphic term so that we can understand that He is speaking of His omniscience and that nothing escapes Him. When we read about the hand or arm of God, that speaks of His omnipotence. God places His Word in language that you and I can understand.

If God is incorporeal, then we must worship Him in spirit and in truth. We worship Him in our spirit, by the Holy Spirit, and that worship is bounded by truth. There is an internal worship of God in our spirits, and there is the external, public worship of God. The internal pleases God most, because God is Spirit. It is true that the external praises His outward glory, for God is to be publicly worshiped. But the external worship is worthless unless the internal, or spiritual, worship is involved. They must go together. We worship God in our spirit and in the realm of truth.

When we come to verse 11, we come to the 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." When

we hear this commandment, if we live in the South, we immediately think of cussing; if we live in the North, we probably think of cursing. But when He says, "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain," He means not only that we are not to attach His name to slang words and bywords, but also that we are not to use His name irreverently, flippantly, or as an exclamation point. In the third commandment, there are actually three truths.

First of all, there is a negative expressed: we must not take God's name in vain. That is, we must not cast any reflection or dishonor upon His name. There is also an affirmation implied: we are to take care to reverence and honor His name. Thirdly, there is a duty enjoined, in the sense that we are required to make mention of His name.

The Meaning of 'The Name of the Lord'

When you read this commandment, "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain," you must understand the phrase, "the name of the Lord." When you read "the name of the Lord," that phrase applies to who God is. It is His very nature; it is His very being. The name of the Lord includes everything from His nature and being to how He has revealed Himself in His Word, in His titles, in His attributes, in His ordinances, and in His works. The name of the Lord stands for His very nature and being. Sometimes that phrase refers to the whole body of truth that God has revealed concerning Himself and His works.

Micah 4:5 says, "For all people will walk every one in the name of his god, and we will walk in the name of the LORD our God for ever and ever." All people will walk in the name of their god; that is, they will walk in the body of revelation their false god has revealed, which they consider truth. But the covenant people say, "We are going to walk in the name of the Lord our God." That is, we are going to walk in the whole body of revealed truth that He has given unto us.

Now hold Deuteronomy chapter 5, but turn to Psalm 20. Notice how often we read the phrase "the name of the Lord" in Scripture and fail to consider it. Psalm 20:1 says, "The LORD hear thee in the day of trouble; the name of the God of Jacob defend thee; send thee help from the sanctuary, and strengthen thee out of Zion."

The name of the God of Jacob defends us. Notice again what is said: “the name of the God of Jacob defend thee.” The psalmist explains that God defends by sending help from the sanctuary, strengthening, remembering the offerings, accepting the sacrifices, granting the desires of our heart, fulfilling our counsel, and enabling us to rejoice in His salvation. He says, “Remember all thy offerings, and accept thy burnt sacrifice. Grant thee according to thine own heart, and fulfill all thy counsel. We will rejoice in thy salvation, and in the name of our God we will set up our banners. The Lord fulfill all thy petitions.” Again, we are going to set up our banners in the name of the Lord our God. All of this is simply in the name of God.

The Scripture also says, “Praise ye the Lord. Praise ye the name of the Lord. Praise him, O you servants of the Lord, ye that stand in the house of the Lord, in the courts of the house of our God. Praise the Lord, for the Lord is good. Look, sing praises unto his name, for it is pleasant.” The Bible tells us that we are to praise the name of the Lord and sing praises unto His name. We read the word name in reference to God often, yet we can totally neglect its meaning. We should notice how often the Bible uses this word in reference to God.

Remember John 1:11–13: “He came unto His own, but His own received Him not.” The passage says again, “He came unto His own, but His own received Him not.” Yet “as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become sons of God, even to them that believe on His name, which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.” Notice the expression, believing on His name.

God’s name is Himself. It is everything He has revealed about Himself, not only in His Word, but in creation, in His attributes, and in His providence. So God’s name is Himself; everything that God has revealed is His name as well. Therefore, we cannot even swear by creation without swearing by God. This third commandment is intimately connected with what we call swearing, vows, and oaths.

Swearing, Oaths, and the Third Commandment

Remember that God's name is representative of everything that He is, everything that He has done, and everything that He has created. Consider Matthew 5:34–37:

“But I say unto you, Swear not at all; neither by heaven; for it is God's throne; nor by the earth; for it is his footstool; neither by Jerusalem; for it is the city of the great King. Neither shalt thou swear by thy head, because thou canst not make one hair white or black. But let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil.”

Our Lord says, “Swear not at all.” He forbids swearing by heaven because it is God's throne, and by the earth because it is His footstool. He also forbids swearing by Jerusalem, because it is the city of the great King, or by one's head, because we cannot make one hair white or black. Then He says, “Let your yea be yea and your nay be nay.”

I have not heard this much since I was a boy, but usually some of the old-timers would say something like, “Well, I swear.” That is all they would say; then they would never say anything else. But the Scripture says, “Swear not at all.”

There are a number of people who think they have to make an exclamation point with everything they say, either by taking God's name in vain or by using some slang or some cuss word. The truth of the matter is this: if we are men of our word, if we speak the truth, and if we say what we mean and mean what we say, we do not have to add exclamation points. It is simply there. It is our word, just like that old adage: a man's word is his bond. When you speak, God is saying, “That is it.” Do not swear by heaven or by earth, because God is the Creator. If you swear by heaven, or if you swear by earth, you are swearing by God.

In Matthew 23, our Lord rails against the Jews and Pharisees because of their misrepresentation and misinterpretation of God's Law. He says, "Woe unto you, ye blind guides, which say, Whosoever shall swear by the temple, it is nothing; but whosoever shall swear by the gold of the temple, he is a debtor! Ye fools and blind: for whether is greater, the gold, or the temple that sanctifieth the gold? And whosoever shall swear by the altar, it is nothing; but whosoever sweareth by the gift that is upon it, he is guilty. Ye fools and blind: for whether is greater, the gift, or the altar that sanctifieth the gift? Whoso therefore shall swear by the altar, sweareth by it, and by all things thereon. And whosoever shall swear by the temple, sweareth

by it, and by him that dwelleth therein. And he that shall swear by heaven, sweareth by the throne of God, and by him that sitteth thereon." You cannot swear without swearing by God. Therefore, you are not to swear flippantly, irreverently, or in a manner that dishonors Him. It is absolutely wrong to do so.

God's glory is revealed in His creation, which is the handiwork of Him. Calvin rightly said, "God's name is profaned whenever any detraction is made from His supreme wisdom, infinite power, justice, truth, clemency, and rectitude."

Stop and think about this. God's name is profaned whenever any detraction is made from His supreme wisdom. How many times do we say, ignorantly and innocently, "Why did this have to happen to me? Why is this happening to my family?" In one sense, we are accusing God of acting without wisdom and bringing to pass things in our lives that we do not like and do not think are valuable or instructive. There are numerous ways to profane God's name. When He said, "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain," understand this: you can take God's name in vain without ever uttering a curse word or even a slang word.

There are many slang words prominent today that are not really cuss words. I have a message on preaching profanity, but let me give an illustration. It has been a habit of many men in the South, particularly, when considering an object, to say, “It’s not worth a damn.” Everybody would say, “That’s a curse word.” In reality, it is not a curse word; it is a slang word.

Do you realize where that word came from and how it entered our vocabulary? There are actually two places. First, it came from England. Remember, John Bunyan was a tinker. A tinker would go by and fix pots that had cracked. A dishonest tinker would take the pot, put a thin layer of mud—or even a thicker layer of mud—over it, and then put a little metal over the mud so that it looked fixed. But when the pot was heated, the mud cracked and the weld cracked. Thus they began to say, “It’s not worth a tinker’s dam.” In other words, it was not worth fixing because the tinker had not done it right.

The second source was the Duke of Wellington in India. The dam was the coin of least value in India, like our penny. When they said, “It’s not worth a damn,” they meant, “It’s not worth a cent. It’s not worth a penny.” I am not going to use the word except in teaching and so forth. I do not go around saying it.

I am simply pointing out that much language we consider slang today initially was neither slang nor a curse word. It was merely an economic expression. But the truth is that we must understand what God means when He says, “Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain.” Consider the word “take.” The Hebrew word is “nasa,” and it literally means to bear, lift up, take, carry, be born, or be carried. You shall not carry the name of the Lord thy God in vain. You shall not take it up in vain. You shall not bear that name in vain.

The word “take” refers to far more than speech; it refers to the totality of life. This is why you can never say a curse word and yet profane the name of God, because your life can be carrying it in vain.

The Scope of 'Taking' and 'Vain'

Here you are saying that you are a Christian. Here you are saying that you believe in the Word of God, and yet your actions and attitudes are actually contrary to the Word of God.

The word "take" literally means to carry, to bear along, or to carry along. He said, "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain." The Hebrew word for "vain" is "shav," which refers to that which is empty, vain, false, worthless, or desolating. So He is saying, "Thou shalt not carry the name of the Lord worthlessly. You shall not carry the name of the Lord in desolation. You shall not carry the name of the Lord falsely."

In other words, your life can take God's name in vain without you ever uttering a curse word. Cursing or cussing just happens to be one way that we can take God's name in vain. Anytime we use God's name flippantly, irreverently, blasphemously, or dishonorably, that is a violation of the third commandment.

Anytime we murmur against His providence, anytime we dislike what He allows to come to pass in our lives, that is a violation of the third commandment. God is God, and His name covers not only

what you and I would refer to as His attributes, but everything about God: His nature, His being, His creation, His works, His providence—everything.

God said in Deuteronomy 28:58 that when we violate the third commandment, it is because of a failure to fear this glorious and fearful name, the Lord thy God. He commands us to fear His name.

Now turn in your Bibles to Nehemiah 9:5. Let me show you a verse that demonstrates how great and glorious the name of the Lord really is: "Then the Levites, Jeshua, and Kadmiel, Bani, Hashabniah, Sherebiah, Hodijah, Shebaniah, and Pethahiah, said, Stand up and bless the Lord your God forever and ever: and blessed be thy glorious name, which is exalted above all blessing and praise."

God's name is so exalted that, although we praise it, His name is actually exalted above all blessing and praise. Yet God has commanded us to praise His name, and we are singing praises unto His name as well.

When you think about the third commandment, you immediately think of cursing or cussing. But the third commandment is very closely connected to what we would call vows and oaths. All false swearing is forbidden in Scripture. Any flippant and light-hearted swearing is also forbidden. Both are violations of the third commandment.

When our Lord says, “Swear not at all,” He is talking about flippant, irreverent swearing, like the old-timers who used to say all the time, “Well, I swear.” That would be flippant. And what would you be swearing by?

There are oaths in the Bible, and there are some oaths that should have been broken but were not. A false oath or wicked oath should not be binding. You remember Herodias’ daughter danced before Herod and pleased him? She was not a three-year-old girl either, I can assure you. He swore to her that he would give her up to the half of his kingdom, whatever she asked for. She said, “I’ll tell you what Mama wants, and this is what I want. I want the head of John the Baptist in a charger.” The Bible said that Herod was highly displeased. Nevertheless, because of his oath and those who sat with

him, why would you keep an oath that violates the third commandment and violates the sixth commandment?

You see what I'm saying? That's a bad oath. So if I told Steve, "I'm going to kill Ron before the sun goes down," am I bound to keep that oath? No, if I do, I'm very wicked. You see what I'm saying? That oath should have never been uttered to begin with. So when our Lord says, "Swear not at all," He is talking about these wicked oaths. He is talking about these irreverent and flippant oaths. Because in the Bible we are commanded to swear by the name of our God. May I remind you, you don't have to turn there, but in Genesis chapter 24, when Abraham was sending Eliezer his servant to get a wife for Isaac, Rebecca, He made Eliezer put his hand under his thigh and swear by God that he would not take a daughter of the Canaanites for Isaac. In fact, the truth of the matter is in Genesis 21, Abraham himself swore by God. Because Abimelech came to him and said, "Look, the Lord has blessed you, and we've treated you well, and you had all this land at your leisure and could do with it as you would. Now what we want you to do is we want you to swear by your God that you're not going to harm us or our children or our children's children." And Abraham said, "I swear." So He swore by God. So you are going to find that in the Bible, in the Old Testament particularly, men indeed swore by God. So I want you to look in your Bibles first of all to Deuteronomy chapter 6. Deuteronomy chapter 6 and verse 13. Then we will go to Deuteronomy chapter 10. Look in Deuteronomy chapter 6 and verse 13.

Here is an interesting statement: "Thou shalt fear the Lord thy God, and serve him, and shalt swear by his name." That's interesting. "Thou shalt fear the Lord thy God, and serve him, and shalt swear by his name." Then if you look in your Bibles to Deuteronomy chapter 10 and verse 20, Deuteronomy 10 and verse 20, again we read: "Thou shalt fear the Lord thy God; him shalt thou serve, and to him shalt thou cleave, and swear by his name." In each oath, in each vow, there's an act of swearing, and it is a solemn appeal unto God. Now you may not even use God's name, but if you swear, and if you take an oath, if you take a vow, it is still in reference to God.

Let me give you something else most people have never thought about. I've preached in a lot of places, and as I was preaching, men

would say, "Amen." That did not bother me; it is wonderful. If you understand what you are saying, the word "amen" simply means "truly, truly, verily, verily, so be it, so be it." But it is more than that, because in the book of Revelation, Jesus Christ is called "the Amen, the faithful and true witness." If Steve says "amen" to what I am saying, he is actually calling Jesus Christ as a witness to what I have just said is truth according to His word. To say "amen" is to call Christ a witness. To swear, take a vow, or take an oath is to do so unto God.

Calvin said this: "God's name then is taken in vain not only when one abuses it by perjury, but when it is lightly and disrespectfully adduced in proof of frivolous and trifling matters."

I speak with respect to oaths. I've talked to many people, especially in counseling, and some say, "I swear this is the truth." It has to be pointed out that our lives often violate the third commandment. In every church you have what are known as hypocrites—Pharisees. You have lost church members, people who profess to be God's people but are not God's people. They talk with their lips, but their lives indicate everything opposite to what they profess.

I've often heard people say, "Well, I don't go to church because of hypocrites that are there." My response has always been, "Well, you must love them a lot, because you're going to spend eternity with them." What does the hypocrite have to do with your life? You can be genuine and real, even though they are not.

But let me show you this in the Bible. Turn to Isaiah 48, and see this in reference to swearing, because obviously that is involved in salvation. I'll explain later. Look, if you would, in Isaiah 48, beginning with verses 1 and 2.

Hypocrisy and False Profession

So many today profess to be God's people that have no desire to really love Him or serve Him. Isaiah 48, beginning with verse 1, says: "Hear ye this, O house of Jacob, which are called by the name of Israel, and are come forth from the waters of Judah, which swear by the name of the Lord, and make mention of the God of Israel, but not

in truth, nor in righteousness. For they call themselves of the holy city, and stay themselves upon the God of Israel; The Lord of hosts is his name."

Here are people who swear by the name of the Lord, but they are not swearing in truth. They are not swearing in righteousness. They like to call themselves Christians. They like to stay themselves upon God. But He said, they are not His people. They are not His people. Note particularly that He mentioned Judah. You remember it was in Judah that the tabernacle, and later the temple, existed; where the priests and the Levites were, and where the law was. Now look in Jeremiah chapter 5, beginning with verses 1 and 2, to show the corruption that existed in Jerusalem.

God tells Jeremiah: "Run ye to and fro through the streets of Jerusalem, and see now, and know, and seek in the broad places thereof, if ye can find a man, if there be any that executeth judgment, that seeketh the truth; and I will pardon it. And though they say, The Lord liveth; surely they swear falsely."

God told Jeremiah to run back and forth through the streets of Jerusalem. If he could find one man who executed truth, one man who sought truth, and one man who swore truthfully and accurately by God, He would pardon the entire city. Jeremiah could not find one.

Jeremiah 4:2 says: "And thou shalt swear, The Lord liveth, in truth, in judgment, and in righteousness; and the nations shall bless themselves in him, and in him shall they glory." Go back to verse 1: "If thou wilt return, O Israel, saith the Lord, return unto me: and if thou wilt put away thine abominations out of my sight, then shalt thou not remove. And if thou shalt swear, The Lord liveth, in truth, in judgment, and righteousness."

They had left God, and He called them to return to Him and put away their abominations. No words—your life has to back up your lips. Your life has to back up your profession. Matthew chapter 7 warns of individuals who seemingly do great works in His name, and yet they are not saved. Notice verse 21.

Our Lord says, "Not everyone that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven." That's what counts.

"Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name?" That is, preached 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."

I have several pastor friends who preached for a number of years before they got converted. They were lost. A lot of unsaved preachers preach. You remember in Philippians chapter 1, when Paul was in prison, he said, "Some preach Christ of contention, supposing to add to my bonds; others preach Christ in sincerity and in truth." In other words, some preach simply because it is, as one young man learned, "a good job."

This young man was really considering entering the ministry, and he greatly respected his pastor. He went to him and asked why he had entered the ministry. He was expecting the answer, "God called me into this." But the reply he received was, "It's a good job." That's what it was to him: a good job. So you have these unsaved preachers; that is for sure.

Hypocrisy existed in the Old Testament just as it does in the New Testament. Isaiah 29:13 says, "Wherefore the Lord said, Forasmuch as this people draw near to me with their mouth, and with their lips do honour me, but have removed their heart far from me, and their fear toward me is taught by the precept of men." Our Lord quotes that passage twice in the New Testament, once in Mark 7 and once in Matthew 15. In Matthew 15 He says, "Ye hypocrites, well did Esaias prophesy of you, saying, This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me."

He continues, "But in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men." In vain. In other words, there is no real, genuine worship when the life does not back up the profession of the lips. That is what it amounts to. This

commandment requires us to honor and value God's name, to praise His name in truth and holiness, and to make mention of His name.

"Magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt his name together." Do you realize that we are required to exalt the name of the Lord together? The answer is yes. Are there promises attached to the third commandment? The answer is yes, obviously. Deuteronomy 5:11 says, "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." Let me spell that out for you. Here is what God is saying: If you take My name in vain, I promise you that I will not hold you guiltless. I will judge you. I will protect the honor of My name. There is also a positive to this: if we honor God and do not take His name in vain, God will not judge us, and obviously we will be blessed by Him.

The Promise of Judgment and Blessing

Clearly, there are promises in this commandment, including the promise of blessing if we obey. I think there is another promise attached here that is implicit in this commandment. Because God said, "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord in vain," we are to honor His name, glorify His name, and magnify His name. Our lives shall back up the profession of our lips.

Isaiah 45:21-25 says: "Tell ye, and bring them near; yea, let them take counsel together: who hath declared this from ancient time? who hath told it from that time? have not I the Lord? and there is no God else beside me; a just God and a Saviour; there is none beside me. Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else. I have sworn by myself, the word is gone out of my mouth in righteousness, and shall not return, That unto me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear. Surely shall one say, In the Lord have I righteousness and strength: even to him shall men come; and all that are incensed against him shall be ashamed. In the Lord shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory."

If you will notice in verse 23, God swore and said, “Every knee shall bow.” The bowing of the knee signifies, first, submission, and secondly, adoration. Then He said, not only will every knee bow, but every tongue will swear. Swearing, then, is connected to a truthful acknowledgment of God. That is why He said, “Thou shalt swear by

His name." You are giving a truthful acknowledgment of who God is, what His nature is, and the truth of His Word.

Now look at verse 24: "Surely shall one say," that is, the one who bows and the one who swears in truth, "Surely shall one say, In the Lord have I righteousness." In other words, I have none of my own. The righteousness is His. "And in the Lord I have strength." It is none of my own; I have it in Him.

"Even to him shall men come." In other words, I believe there is, in this third commandment, an implied promise that if we honor God and exalt His name, and do not take that name or carry it in vain, God is going to use us and make us useful in His kingdom. He will give us men who come to us for truth.

I can think of men in time past. I am thinking of one who is now dead. I buried him a few years back. His wife was a Christian, but he was not, and she was very concerned about him. She asked me to visit him. I did, and as I was going in the front door, he was going out the back door—not just once, but a number of times—until God got hold of him, and then he came to me.

There was another young man to whom I witnessed, and he wanted nothing to do with me. When we met on the sidewalk, he would see me and cross the street so he would not have to speak to me. But I would holler at him anyhow. When God got hold of his heart and saved him, I remember saying at midnight, "Gary, please, just get up and go home. I have to go to bed. I will try to answer some more questions for you tomorrow."

I had one truck driver who came to me. He had literally picked up two preachers and thrown them out of his house. He picked them up bodily and threw them out. He came to me, and for eight solid hours I did nothing but witness to him nonstop, and he was asking for it. This is what I am saying: God is promising that there will be usefulness if we honor Him.

The Bible tells us in 1 Corinthians chapter 1 and verse 21 that it was by the foolishness of preaching that God chose to save those that believe. When we understand, "Thou shalt not take"—thou shalt not carry, thou shalt not bear—the name, everything that God is and everything that God has revealed, we understand that we shall not

take that name worthlessly, in vain, uselessly, or falsely. It has to reflect on the whole life.

The Apostle Paul said in 2 Timothy chapter 2 and verse 10, “Therefore I endure all things for the elect’s sakes, that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory.” Paul endured all things. Was Paul a vessel fit for the Master’s use? What did God say to him in Acts chapter 9? “I’m gonna make you a vessel, and you’re gonna bear My name before the Jews and the Gentiles and kings.” He was a chosen vessel.

Now look at 2 Timothy chapter 2, beginning with verse 20: “But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and of silver, but also of wood and of earth; and some to honour, and some to dishonour.” Verse 21 says, “If a man therefore purge himself from these,” that is, the dishonourable things, “he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet,” or suited, “for the master’s use, and prepared unto every good work.”

If you came to my house with your grandchild and asked for something he could use to dig in the sandbox, I would not hand you a sterling silver spoon. I would hand you some old spoon that is worthless. I do not care whether it comes back or not. In our homes, there are things we really do not care anything about, and there are other things we care a very great deal about.

But the vessels here, He is talking about the body. In every house there are things that are useful and worth a lot, and there are some things that are worthless. If a man purges himself from these things that are worthless and vain, he shall be a vessel fit for the Master's use. So when He said, "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain," He is basically saying that we need to get out of our lives any and everything that is worthless and useless and will not bring honor and glory to God.

We take oaths and vows. A vow is an oath. We have marriage vows, baptismal vows, and all kinds of vows. In 1 Timothy chapter 6 and verse 12, Paul tells Timothy: "Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses," or confessed a good confession before many witnesses. What is he talking about?

He is talking about Timothy's baptism. You can check any commentator or scholar you want to; every one of them will tell you this is the vow, the oath, that Timothy took when he was baptized before so many witnesses.

Vows, Baptism, and Integrity of Word

The earliest baptismal formula consisted of three words: "Jesus is Lord." When you swore "Jesus is Lord," you were in essence denying that Caesar was Lord and that you were lord. You were bowing, kneeling, and submitting to the one true and living God through His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. Paul is telling Timothy to remember this vow, this oath that he had taken: Jesus is Lord.

It is striking when you read Psalm 15. Speaking of those who are fit to abide in the Lord's tabernacle, the psalmist says in verse 4, "he that sweareth to his own hurt, and changeth not." In other words, once he gives a vow, once he gives his word, he does not change.

If I tell Brother Gary I am going to sell him my bicycle for $50, and then discover it is worth $500, I have already told him I will sell it to him for $50. I could say, "I told you $50, and I will sell it to you for $50 because I said that. It is worth $500; if you would like to give me more, wonderful. If not, I said $50, and that is what I will take. I am going to stick to my word."

In former times, a man's word was his bond. When I was a boy, I saw my father enter into deals with other farmers worth $40,000 or $50,000, and all they did was shake hands.

That was it. When one farmer died, the other farmers would go to his widow and say, "I had a deal with your husband. I owe him so much money. Here it is." You will not find that today. Today, you get a contract and have it notarized forty or fifty times, and they will still find a way to break it, because vows, oaths, and words mean nothing.

God said we are not to carry that name in vain. If we are His, our lives are reflected in every area of our life. We treat God flippantly and irreverently when we do not give Him the honor and glory due unto His name.

The Fear of the Lord's Name and Conclusion

Turn to Deuteronomy chapter 28. This passage is in light of the law that has been given, the curses and the blessings. Notice the curses that will fall if you disobey. Beginning with verse 58: "If thou wilt not observe to do all the words of this law," in other words, if you will not listen to Me or obey Me, "if thou wilt not observe to do all the words of this law that are written in this book, that thou mayest fear this glorious and fearful name, THE LORD THY GOD; Then the Lord will make thy plagues wonderful, and the plagues of thy seed, even great plagues, and of long continuance, and sore sicknesses, and of long continuance. Moreover he will bring upon thee all the diseases of Egypt, which thou wast afraid of; and they shall cleave unto thee. Also every sickness, and every plague, which is not written in the book of this law, them will the Lord bring upon thee, until thou be destroyed."

Why? Because you did not fear this wonderful, glorious, and holy name, the Lord thy God. I believe there is another implied promise: if we honor Him and do not carry His name in vain, we will be enabled to live in His fear and in what we would call godliness, holiness, and true piety.

So many people try to deceive others, and even try to deceive God Himself. That is what a hypocrite does, what a Pharisee does, and what church members who are not really saved try to do. But 2 Timothy 2:19 makes this exceedingly clear: “Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his. And, Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity.” The Lord knoweth them that are His. You cannot fool God. He knows who belongs to Him and who does not belong to Him. If you name the name of Christ, He says, “Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity.”

If we observe the third commandment, we will be enabled to do what the Apostle Paul told us in Ephesians 4: “I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called.” Walking worthy of being a Christian means that we do not carry or bear His name in vain. Everywhere we are, in every area of our life, we demonstrate that we are Christians, submit

to Him, honor Him, and glorify Him. “Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain.”

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we bow to Thee. We thank You for Your word and Your truth. We ask You, Father, to help us not to bear Thy name in vain, not to carry it, Lord, worthlessly, needlessly, uselessly, and falsely. Help us to trust Thee, live for Thee, and honor Thee. Help us to magnify Thy name, sing praise of Thy name, and glorify Thee, for Thou art God. May we fear this awesome and wonderful name, the Lord Thy God. In the name of Jesus Christ, we ask and pray. Amen.

A vow is an oath. We have marriage vows, baptismal vows, and all kinds of vows. In 1 Timothy 6:12, Paul tells Timothy: “Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses,” or confessed a good confession before many witnesses. What is he talking about? He is talking about Timothy’s baptism. Any commentator or scholar will tell you that this was the vow, the oath, Timothy took when he was baptized before so many witnesses.

I told you in times past that the earliest baptismal formula consisted of three words: “Jesus is Lord.” When you swore this, you were in essence denying that Caesar was lord and that you were lord. You were bowing, kneeling, and submitting to the one true and living God through His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. So Paul is telling Timothy, “You need to remember this vow. You need to remember this oath that you have taken. Jesus is Lord.”

It is striking when you read Psalm 15. When the psalmist is talking about those who are fit to abide in the Lord’s tabernacle, one of the things he says in verse 4 is, “he that sweareth to his own hurt, and changeth not.” In other words, once he gives a vow, once he gives his word, he does not change. If I tell Brother Gary I am going to sell him my bicycle for fifty dollars, and then find out it is worth five hundred dollars, I have already told him I will sell it to him for fifty. I could say, “I told you fifty, and I will sell it to you for fifty, because I said that. It is worth five hundred. If you would like to give me more, wonderful. If not, I said fifty; that is what I am going to take. I am going to stick to my word.”

In former times, a man's word was his bond. When I was a boy, I saw my father enter into deals with other farmers worth forty or fifty thousand dollars, and all they did was shake hands. That was it. When one farmer died, the others would go to that widow and say, "I had a deal with your husband. I owe him so much money. Here it is." You will not find that today. Today, you get a contract, have it notarized forty or fifty times, and they will still find a way to break it, because vows, oaths, and words mean nothing.

God said we are not to carry that name in vain. If we are His, our lives are reflected in every area of our life. We treat God flippantly and irreverently when we do not give Him the honor and glory due unto His name. Deuteronomy 28 presents the law that has been given, with its curses and blessings, and speaks of the curses that will fall if you disobey. The passage begins with verse 58.

"If thou wilt not observe to do all the words of this law," in other words, if you will not listen to Me or obey Me, "if thou wilt not observe to do all the words of this law that are written in this book, that thou mayest fear this glorious and fearful name, THE LORD THY GOD; Then the Lord will make thy plagues wonderful, and the plagues of thy seed, even great plagues, and of long continuance, and sore sicknesses, and of long continuance. Moreover he will bring upon thee all the diseases of Egypt, which thou wast afraid of; and they shall cleave unto thee. Also every sickness, and every plague, which is not written in the book of this law, them will the Lord bring upon thee, until thou be destroyed." Why? Because you did not fear this wonderful, glorious, and holy name, the Lord thy God.

I believe there is another implied promise: if we honor Him and do not carry His name in vain, we will be enabled to live in His fear—in what you and I would call godliness, holiness, and true piety.

So many people try to deceive others, and even try to deceive God Himself. That is what a hypocrite does. That is what a Pharisee does. That is what church members who are not really saved try to do. But 2 Timothy 2:19 makes this exceedingly clear: "Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his. And, Let every one that nameth the name of Christ

depart from iniquity." The Lord knows those who are His. You cannot fool God.

He knows who belongs to Him and who does not. If you name the name of Christ, He says, let everyone who names that name depart from iniquity. If we observe the third commandment, we will be enabled to do what the Apostle Paul told us in Ephesians chapter 4: "I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called." Walking worthy of being a Christian means that we do not carry or bear His name in vain.

Everywhere we are, in every area of our life, we demonstrate that we are Christians: we submit to Him, honor Him, and glorify Him. "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain."

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we bow to Thee. We thank You for Your word and truth. We ask You to help us not to bear Thy name in vain, not to carry it, Lord, worthlessly, needlessly, uselessly, and falsely. Help us to trust Thee, live for Thee, and honor Thee. Help us to magnify Thy name, sing praise of Thy name, and glorify Thee, for Thou art God. May we fear this awesome and wonderful name, the Lord Thy God. In the name of Jesus Christ, we ask and pray. Amen.

CHAPTER 12

Promises Of The Law

Part 12

Introduction to the Fourth Commandment

Deuteronomy chapter 5. In this series, "The Promises of the Law," we are dealing with the fourth commandment. Deuteronomy 5, verses 12 through 15:

"Keep the Sabbath day to sanctify it, as the Lord thy God hath commanded thee. Six days thou shalt labor and do all thy work, but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God. In it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, nor thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thine ox, nor thine ass, nor any of thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates, that thy manservant and thy maidservant may rest as well as thou. And remember that thou wast a servant in the land of Egypt, and that the Lord thy God brought thee out thence through a mighty hand and by a stretched out arm. Therefore the Lord thy God commanded thee to keep the Sabbath day."

The fourth commandment is one in which lies a great deal of controversy. I am certainly not going to answer all the objections and problems concerning it in this message; that is not my intent. I could not do so in two messages, and probably not in twenty, because there is a great deal of division over this commandment, even among many Christians.

In all probability, some of the things I say may raise hostility from those who hold differing views. It is not my intent to attack them. I am simply trying to share with you the Scripture, based upon the light and understanding that God has given me.

When we talk about the Sabbath day, most people think of Saturday. I suppose the reason is the emphasis laid down through history on the weekly Sabbath. But the word "Sabbath" does not mean Saturday, as I will point out later. The truth is that there is more than one Sabbath.

When I think about individuals who are so strict in observing what they call the weekly Sabbath, I cannot help but think of James chapter 2, verses 10 and 11, especially verse 10, where God says, "For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, is guilty of all." If you are going to keep a weekly Sabbath, why not keep the other Sabbaths as well? There is not only the weekly Sabbath; there is also the New Moon Sabbath, found in Numbers chapter 28, verses 11-15.

Multiple Sabbaths in the Old Testament

On the New Moon Sabbaths, labor was not forbidden, but sacrifices were required. The Feast of the Trumpets, the New Year, was a Sabbath. Then there was the sabbatical year: every seventh year the land had to rest, and the people rested with it. There was also the year of Jubilee, the fiftieth year. In addition, the seven annual feasts were considered Sabbaths. Seven times seven is forty-nine, so the forty-ninth year was also a Sabbath, and the fiftieth year, the year of Jubilee, was a Sabbath. Thus there were two straight years of Sabbaths.

My question is this: if someone is so fastidious as to observe the weekly Sabbath, why do they not also observe the New Moon

Sabbath, the New Year Sabbath, the Feast of the Trumpets, the seventh feast, the sabbatical year, and the year of Jubilee? You will find that if you try to keep all those Sabbaths in our day and age, it will be almost impossible, just as it was impossible in the Old Testament as well.

In fact, the children of Israel, and especially Judah and Jerusalem, got into trouble for violating God's Sabbaths. In the book of Leviticus, chapter 26, verses 33–34, God says that if they did not keep His Sabbaths, He was going to send them into captivity. And while they were in captivity, the land was going to enjoy her Sabbaths. Obviously, the northern tribes went into captivity into Assyria, and the southern tribes went into captivity into Babylon.

Here we find what happened to the children of Judah and Jerusalem specifically, and why it happened to them. The Bible says, “And them that had escaped from the sword, carried he away to Babylon, where they were servants to him and his sons, until the reign of the kingdom of Persia, to fulfill the word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah, until the land had enjoyed her sabbaths. For as long as she lay desolate, she kept sabbath to fulfill threescore and ten years.”

So the children of Judah were in captivity for seventy years. God says, “For seventy years My land is going to keep her Sabbaths.”

Now, when we talk about the Sabbath day, most people will say that Saturday is the Sabbath, which is not necessarily true. Saturday was a Sabbath once every seven years, but so was every other day of the week as well. The days of the week in the Old Testament and the days of the week in the New Testament were by different names, but there were still only seven days in the week. Using the terminology of our days, there were Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday, and Sunday. The names were different, but there were seven days. Saturday would have been Sabbath once every seventh year, but so would Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, and Sunday as well. Now you are going to ask, how could that be?

The answer is that it is based upon the Hebrew calendar, which was set in Exodus by God Himself. In Exodus chapter 12, we read

about the Passover, when God delivered the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt: “And the Lord spake unto Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt, saying, This month shall be unto you the beginning of months. It shall be the first month of the year to you.” Thus, Abib was always to be the first month of the Hebrew calendar. God required it.

In verse 14, He says, “And this day shall be unto you for a memorial and you shall keep it a feast to the Lord throughout your generations. You shall keep it a feast by an ordinance forever.” Not only was the month fixed, but the date was fixed as well. Verse 18 says, “In the first month, on the 14th day of the month at even, you shall eat unleavened bread until the one and twentieth day of the month at even.” Here we have the fourteenth day of the month, when the blood was applied, and the next day Israel was to leave Egypt.

Now look in Exodus chapter 13, beginning with verse 3: “And Moses said unto the people, Remember this day, this particular day in which you came out from Egypt, out of the house of bondage; for by strength of hand the Lord brought you out from this place: there shall no leavened bread be eaten. This day came you out in the month Abib.” Here, then, the month and the date were set. The Hebrew day began in the evening and ended in the evening, and the fifteenth of Abib, the first month, had to be a Sabbath every year. That meant the first and the eighth of their month had to be Sabbaths as well. They were fixed Sabbaths. If you study the Scripture, once you had Passover, you had to number seven Sabbaths from there for those feasts. Then, of course, the fiftieth day was Pentecost.

Since the month and the date were fixed, that meant the day varied. The fifteenth had to be a Sabbath. That meant the eighth was a Sabbath, and the first was a Sabbath. They numbered after that as well.

It is like your birthday. Suppose your birthday is September 3. September 3 this year may come on Monday. If September 3 comes on Monday this year, next year it will be Tuesday, the following year Wednesday, and so on until it has gone through seven times, when it starts right back over. Thus the Sabbath, the weekly Sabbath, varied

every year. I could almost say with certainty that Saturday was a Sabbath, but it was a Sabbath only once every seven years. Since the month and date were set, the day was therefore absolutely varied.

Moreover, it is possible to have more than one Sabbath in a week. How could that be? What if you had a New Moon Sabbath? The new moon, or the new month, came during one week. So actually you would have a New Moon Sabbath and then a weekly Sabbath as well. If one of those annual feasts or some other certain day came, that would be an additional Sabbath. That is why, in the New Testament, it said "down the end of the Sabbaths," plural. There could have been more than one Sabbath in the week that our Lord was crucified.

The interesting thing is that you could have more than one Sabbath. Here is another fact concerning the Sabbath: the emphasis on the Sabbath in the Old Testament, and even in the New Testament, was not worship. It was rest. In the Old Testament, worship was family-centered. They worshiped as a family. When it came to sacrificial worship,

The Sabbath Emphasizes Rest, Not Worship

That had to be done at the tabernacle and/or the temple—no other place. But the emphasis in the Bible was not on worship on the Sabbath; it was on rest. Exodus 34:21 says, "Six days shalt thou work, but on the seventh day thou shalt rest: in earing time and in harvest shalt thou rest." It did not matter if harvest was coming in; if it was a Sabbath day, you had to rest.

Leviticus 23:3 says, "Six days shall work be done, but the seventh day is the Sabbath of rest, an holy convocation; you shall do no work therein: it is a Sabbath of the Lord in all of your dwellings." Jeremiah 7:21–22 says, "Thus saith the Lord, Take heed to yourselves, and bear no burden on the Sabbath day, nor bring it in by the gates of Jerusalem. Neither carry forth a burden out of your houses on the Sabbath day, neither do ye any work. But hallow ye the Sabbath day, as I commanded your fathers."

Scripture shows how absolutely rest was enforced and that no work was to be done. In Exodus 16:29, everyone was to abide in his place on the Sabbath day. In Nehemiah 13:19, the city gates were to

be shut; no one could come in or go out. Asses should not be laden, no burdens could be borne, no fires were to be kindled, no sheaves brought in, no sticks gathered, and no vittles or wares bought or sold. These instructions are found in Nehemiah 13:15, Jeremiah 7, Exodus 35:3, Numbers 15, and Nehemiah 10. No wine was to be traded in the press.

In other words, there was no work to be done on the Sabbath, period. The emphasis was rest. The word “Sabbath” does not mean Saturday; it means cessation or rest. That is all it means: cessation or rest.

The problem is that Israel consistently and constantly violated the Sabbaths. Not only did they consistently and constantly violate the Sabbaths, they violated the totality of God's law. In Amos chapter 8, beginning with verse 4, God speaks against Israel, and especially against Judah and Jerusalem: “Hear this, O ye that swallow up the needy, even to make the poor of the land to fail. So here the people are swallowing up the needy and harassing the poor, saying, verse 5, ‘When will the new moon be gone, that we may sell corn? and the Sabbath, that we may set forth wheat, making the ephah small, and the shekel great, and falsifying the balances by deceit, that we may buy the poor for silver, and the needy for a pair of shoes, yea, and sell the refuse of the wheat.’” Their conduct revealed not merely neglect of the Sabbath, but contempt for the needy, dishonest measures, and a willingness to purchase the poor for silver.

Here are people who were not only willing to violate the Sabbath; they were stealing, defrauding, cheating, and doing whatever they wanted to do. All of this is absolutely contrary to God.

When we are talking about violations of the Sabbath, to violate the Sabbath was to merit the death penalty. God says in Exodus 31:14-15, “You shall keep the Sabbath therefore, for it is holy unto you. Everyone that defiles it shall surely be put to death. For whosoever doeth any work therein, that soul shall be cut off from among his people. Six days may work be done, but in the seventh is the Sabbath of rest, holy to the Lord. Whosoever doeth any work on the seventh day, he shall surely be put to death.”

In Exodus 35:2, God says, “Six days shall work be done, but on the seventh day there shall be to you an holy day, a Sabbath of rest to the Lord. Whosoever doeth any work therein shall be put to death.” So here is the penalty for violating the Sabbath.

In Numbers 15, the Lord first addresses the person who sins through ignorance, whether he is born among the children of Israel or is the stranger that sojourns among them. Then He turns to the soul that acts presumptuously, whether born in the land or a stranger. The distinction is between ignorance and deliberate defiance: the latter reproaches the Lord, despises His word, and breaks His commandment, and is cut off. God says, “You shall have one law for him that sinneth through ignorance, both for him that is born among the children of Israel and the stranger that sojourneth among them.” So there is one law; it does not matter whether you are homeborn or a stranger. “But the soul that doeth aught presumptuously, whether he be born in the land or a stranger, the same reproacheth the Lord, and that soul shall be cut off from among his people. Because he hath despised the word of the Lord, and hath broken his commandment, that soul shall utterly be cut off, his iniquity shall be upon him.”

"And while the children of Israel were in the wilderness, they found a man that gathered sticks upon the Sabbath day. And they that found him gathering sticks brought him unto Moses and Aaron and unto all the congregation. And they put him in a ward, because it was not declared what should be done to him. And the Lord said unto Moses, The man shall be surely put to death, and all the congregation shall stone him with stones without the camp. And all the congregation brought him without the camp and stoned him with stones, and he died as the Lord commanded Moses."

Here is an interesting incident that raises an awful lot of questions. Although we understand that the death penalty was involved for violating the Sabbaths, this man was out picking up sticks. Why was he out picking up sticks? It could be that he needed fuel for the fire, not particularly to warm himself, but to cook. Eating was allowed on the Sabbath. Work is condemned many times throughout the Scripture. Why, then, was this man put to death for

gathering a few sticks on the Sabbath day, probably in order that he could cook something that he might eat?

I want to answer that question for you, but you will have to wait until I get toward the end of this message. Until then, I must point out that when we are talking about the Sabbath, there are different Sabbaths mentioned in the Bible. There is the Creation Sabbath, which celebrates creation. Look in your Bibles to Exodus chapter 20, beginning with verse 8: "Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labor and do all thy work, but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God. In it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger, that is within thy gates. For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, and the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day. Wherefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day, and hallowed it."

Creation Sabbath and Hebrew Sabbath

The Creation Sabbath obviously commemorates creation. Isaiah 45 and verse 12 says, "I have made the earth and created man upon it. I, even my hands, have stretched out the heavens, and all the hosts have I commanded." Isaiah 45 and verse 18 says, "For thus saith the Lord that created the heavens, God Himself that formed the earth and made it, He has established it, He created it not in vain, He formed it to be inhabited, I am the Lord and there is none else." The Creation Sabbath celebrates creation.

When the Bible says that God rested on the Sabbath day, God was not tired. God is omnipotent; He is all-powerful. He does not run out of energy or strength, and He does not become tired. He had completed His creation and ceased creating. All the word "Sabbath" means is a cessation or a rest. God rested in the sense that He had finished His creation and was not creating anything else anymore. That is the Creation Sabbath.

There is, secondly, the Hebrew Sabbath. The Hebrew Sabbath did not celebrate the creation; it celebrated deliverance from Egypt. Deuteronomy 5, our text, says in verse 13, "six days thou shalt labor." Verse 14 says, "but the seventh is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God, in it you are not to do any work." Verse 15 continues, "and remember

that thou wast a servant in the land of Egypt, and that the Lord thy God brought thee out thence through a mighty hand, and by a stretched out arm."

“Therefore the Lord thy God commanded thee to keep the Sabbath day.” Why? Because God brought them out of the land of Egypt. In other words, the Hebrew Sabbath is not celebrating creation per se; it is celebrating deliverance from Egypt.

When you think about these two Sabbaths, these two rests—the creation rest and the Hebrew rest—there are two very clear implications. First, the pattern of the Sabbath is God's creation rest. Secondly, the goal of the Sabbath is man's redemption rest.

Now, in Exodus chapter 6, beginning with verse 5, God says, “And I've also heard the groanings of the children of Israel, whom the Egyptians keep in bondage, and I have remembered my covenant.” He says to the children of Israel, “I am the Lord, and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will rid you out of their bondage, and I will redeem you with a stretched out arm, and with great judgments, and I will make you to me for a people, and I will be to you a God. And you shall know that I am the Lord your God, which bringeth you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians.”

Here is redemption. Therefore, in Deuteronomy chapter 5, God says, “You keep this Sabbath because I have brought you out of the land of Egypt.” The pattern of the Sabbath is God's creation rest; the goal of the Sabbath is man's redemption rest. He is talking about redemption and rest as He delivered the children of Israel out of Egypt.

If this was understood, the Pharisees would not have maliciously condemned Jesus Christ in the New Testament. Since the goal of the Sabbath is the redemption of man, you have to understand that redemption is rest. We have been redeemed. Life could be saved on the Sabbath day. Our Lord Himself said it is right to save life on the Sabbath day, as recorded in Mark chapter 3 and Luke chapter 6. The sick could also be healed on the Sabbath day, as recorded in Matthew chapter 10 and Luke chapter 14. Livestock could be rescued on the Sabbath day, as recorded in Matthew 12 and Luke 14. It is

proper to eat and preserve your life on the Sabbath day, as shown in Matthew chapter 12. Since redemption involves victory over one's enemies, it was also right to fight on the Sabbath day if necessary. The goal of man's redemption is rest; therefore, you cannot rest unless you have victory and unless you have everything that God has provided for you.

In the New Testament, these Pharisees and scribes were often attacking Jesus Christ, and they did not even understand the goal of the Sabbath.

There is the creation rest. There is the Hebrew rest. There is another rest not mentioned right here, and that is the Canaan rest. A passage in the New Testament puts all these things together and in a proper perspective: Hebrews chapter 4. We will read the first 11 verses, and then do a little more reading before commenting on this passage. Beginning in verse 1: "Let us therefore fear, lest a promise being left us of entering into His rest, any of you should seem to come short of it."

The True Rest in Hebrews 4

And unto us was the gospel preached as well as unto them, but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it. For we which have believed do enter into rest, as he said, “As I have sworn in my wrath, if they shall enter into my rest,” although the works were finished from the foundation of the world. For he spake in a certain place on the seventh day on this wise, “And God did rest the seventh day from all his works.” And in this place again, “If they shall enter into my rest.” Since therefore it remaineth that some must enter therein, and they to whom it was first preached entered not in because of unbelief. Again he limited a certain day, saying in David, “Today, after so long a time,” as it is said, “Today, if you will hear his voice, harden not your hearts.” For if Jesus had given them rest, then would he not have afterwards spoken of another day? There remaineth therefore rest to the people of God.

For he that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from His. Let us labor, therefore, to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief.

In order to really comprehend chapter 4, you have to understand that the argument actually begins in chapter 3. In Hebrews 3, verses 10 and 11, God says, “Wherefore I was grieved with that generation and said, They do always err in their heart and they have not known my ways. So I swear in my wrath, they shall not enter into my rest.” These people always erred in their heart and did not know His ways. Now skip down to verse 17: “But with whom was he grieved forty years?”

Was it not with them that had sinned, whose carcasses fell in the wilderness? And to whom swore he that they should not enter into his rest, but to them that believed not? We see that they could not enter in because of unbelief.

Now let me try to tie some things together. First of all, notice in Hebrews 4:4 a clear reference to what you and I would call the creation rest: “For He spake in a certain place on the seventh day on this wise, And God did rest the seventh day from all His works.” So there is the creation rest.

When you get to verses 7 and 8, we are now talking about a Canaan rest—not the Hebrew rest, not the deliverance from Egypt, but the victory over their enemies in occupying Canaan. Look in verse 7: “Again, he limited a certain day, saying in David, Today, after so long a time, as it is said, Today, if you will hear his voice, harden not your hearts. For if Jesus or Joshua had given them rest, then would he not afterwards have spoken of another day?”

The word “Jesus” in verse 8 is actually the word “Joshua.” The words “Jesus” and “Joshua” are basically one and the same, because the word means “salvation,” or “salvation is of the Lord.” So now we are talking about the Canaan rest: if Joshua had given them rest, he would not have spoken of another day.

God's creation rest is the pattern. The Hebrew rest pointed out that the goal of the Sabbath was man's redemption. The Canaan rest demonstrated victory over our enemies. In this passage, then, we are talking about the creation rest, the Hebrew rest, and the Canaan rest. There is yet another rest.

The creation rest, the Hebrew rest, and the Canaan rest were basically emblematical and symbolical. In other words, they were

not the real rest. God's creation rest, of course, was the goal, but the Hebrew rest and the Canaan rest were simply symbolic.

Here is, I believe, an implied promise in this fourth commandment: If it had been kept and observed the way God commanded, those Israelites would have realized that their Hebrew rest and their Canaan rest were only symbolical. They were not real rest, but pointed to that which was real and genuine.

For instance, go back to Hebrews chapter 4, verse 1. The author of Hebrews is writing to Hebrew Christians, or believers, in the New Testament, and he says, “Let us therefore fear, lest a promise being left of us entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it.”

If the creation rest was what we were to enter into, that is over and done with. If the Hebrew rest was what we were to enter into, that is over and done with. If the Canaan rest was what we were to enter into, that is over and done with. There is another rest, and he is talking about that here. In this rest, faith and obedience are required.

You did not necessarily have to be a believer to come out of Egypt. You did not have to be a believer particularly to go into Canaan. There was a mixed multitude that came out with the Hebrews out of Egypt. A lot of people died in the wilderness, and their children went in, but that did not guarantee that all their children were believers either. As the Apostle Paul said in Romans 9, “they are not all Israel who are of Israel.” In other words, there is an elect within an election. So he is saying there is still a promise. Look at verses 2 and 3.

"For unto us was the gospel preached as well as unto them. But the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them which heard it. For we who have believed do enter into rest." There is a rest that we enter into. As he said, "I've sworn in my wrath, if they shall enter into my rest," although the works were finished from the foundation of the world.

This is a rest that we enter into by faith, which was finished from the foundation of the world. Obviously, the creation rest, the Hebrew rest, and the Canaan rest were only symbolical, because now he is

speaking of a different rest, one entered into only by faith and obedience. Look at verses 5 and 6: "And in this place again, If they shall enter into my rest. Seeing therefore it remaineth that some must enter therein, and they to whom it was first preached entered not in because of unbelief."

This demonstrates that the Hebrew rest and the Canaan rest were not the real, genuine rest or the real, genuine Sabbaths. In verses 7 and 8, there is a quote by David, taken from Psalm 95, verses 7 through 11: "Again, he limited a certain day, saying in David, Today, after so long a time, as it is said, Today, if you will hear his voice, harden not your hearts. For if Jesus or Joshua had given them rest, then would he not have afterwards have spoken of another day?"

When David said this in Psalm 95, the land had already been occupied five hundred years, and creation had taken place three thousand years earlier. David, therefore, was speaking of a different rest: other than the creation rest, the Hebrew rest, and the Canaan rest. The creation rest pictures the eternal rest in which those who believe, trust, and obey the Lord will rest from their works as He rested from His works.

The creation rest is the goal, or it is the pattern. We have already seen that, in the Hebrew rest and the Canaan rest, the goal is man's redemption and man's redemptive rest. We also see that the Hebrew rest and the Canaan rest were not the real rest. If you go back to verse 8: "For if Jesus or Joshua had given them rest, then would he not afterwards have spoken of another day?" Now look at verse 9: "There remaineth therefore rest to the people of God." In other words, all the rests that have been mentioned are not the real rest. There remains, therefore, rest for the people of God. The word "rest" is the Greek word "sabbatismos." Literally, verse 9 says, "There remaineth therefore a sabbath for the people of God." There remaineth therefore a sabbath rest for the people of God. This sabbath rest is a rest where redemption is real and genuine.

We are delivered from our toils and burdens, our sins, and anything and everything that troubles us. It is a rest in which we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us. Obviously, when you look at verse 9, "There remaineth therefore a rest for the people of God," the creation rest could not have been that which we were to

rest in. The Hebrew rest was not that which we would rest in. The Canaan rest was not that which we would rest in. There remaineth therefore rest for the people of God. It is going to be a rest like the creation rest, where God ceased from all of His works. It will be a complete and total rest. It will be like the Hebrew and Canaan rests in the sense that we will be redeemed and victorious, free from all our burdens and trials. So the question has to be asked: Where do you find such a rest in the Bible?

Jesus Christ as Our Sabbath

The answer comes back: the only rest that you find in the Bible that answers to all of these pictures, types, and symbols is found in the Lord Jesus Christ, who is our Sabbath. In fact, Matthew, Mark, and Luke declare Him to be the Lord of the Sabbath day.

In Jesus Christ, we have redemption, and in Jesus Christ, we have rest. Our Lord says, "All things are delivered unto me of my Father, and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him." Then He says, "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

Have you ever stopped to think about this? It is only in Jesus Christ that we rest from all of our burdens, all of our toils, and all of our deeds. We rest totally in His complete work. For instance, I have told people that there are only two letters that distinguish Christianity from all other religions. How can I say that? Because most all of the other religions spell theirs D-O. You have to do this. You have to do that. You do, and you do, and you do, and maybe you might end up saved.

That's not Christianity. Christianity is not spelled D-O. It is spelled D-O-N-E, done. That's why Jesus Christ said, "It is finished." Complete salvation, complete redemption, and complete rest are found only in Jesus Christ. That's why in Titus, chapter 3, verses 5 through 7, the Bible says, "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost, which He shed on

us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Lord, that being justified by His grace we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life."

He is our rest, not just in eternity, but in time and history as well. We are to fulfill our duties, obligations, and responsibilities to the best of our ability, for God's honor and glory, and then we are to rest. The Bible says in Romans 8, verse 28, "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to His purpose."

Practical Rest in Christ

Let me give you an illustration of what I mean by Jesus Christ being our rest. Suppose Steve and I get into a knockdown, roaring argument. It gets bad. In the middle of it, I catch myself and say, “Man, this is not right.” I look at Steve and say, “Steve, I shouldn’t have said those things. I shouldn’t have acted that way. I’m sorry. Please forgive me. I want our relationship to be like it should. Please just forgive me.”

Steve looks at me and says, “It’ll be a cold day in July before I forgive you.” Now wait a minute. He was wrong, and I was wrong. I’m trying to do what is right, and he is not willing to do what is right. According to the Bible, I could still appeal to him, and he still might not listen. If he does not listen, I can take Francis and David, go to him, and say, “Steve, I was wrong. I want your forgiveness.” Steve could run us all out of the house. I could bring him before the church, and Steve still would not forgive me. Here is my question: Once I have done that, what else can I do? Nothing.

What am I going to do? “Lord, I have done everything I can do. I have done it in obedience, for Your honor and Your glory. Lord, I’m going to rest in You. You are going to have to work in his heart. I can’t.” That is what we mean when we say it is not merely an eternal rest. It is that, but it is also a temporary rest: We do what we are supposed to do, and then we rest. Whether you are talking about finances, family, work, or anything else, you do what you are supposed to do in faith, to the best of your ability, for God’s honor and glory, and then you simply rest.

The reason we meet on Sunday is very simple. We are not celebrating creation, the Hebrew deliverance from Egypt, Canaan victory, or any of those pictures. We meet on Sunday because we are celebrating reality. In Jesus Christ we have real, genuine redemption and real, genuine rest. We worship and glorify Him and His accomplished work, which He finished.

The resurrection of Jesus Christ is not celebrated once a year. It is celebrated every Sunday because He arose on the first day of the week. That is why we worship Him publicly on the first day of the week. In Jesus Christ we have redemption and rest. He is our Creator, our Deliverer, our Preserver, and our Sustainer. Everything that we have, we have in Jesus Christ.

Matthew Henry wrote: "From the certainty of another rest, besides the seventh day of the rest instituted and observed, both before and after the fall, and besides that typical Canaan rest, which most of the Jews fell short of by unbelief, for the psalmist has spoke of another day and another rest, whence it is evident that there is more spiritual and excellent Sabbath remaining for the people of God than that under which Joshua led the Jews. And this rest remaining is"—he lists two things. First, "a rest of grace and comfort and holiness in the gospel state." We are saved by His grace. This is the rest wherewith the Lord Jesus, our Joshua, causes weary souls and awakened consciences to rest. This is refreshing. Second, it "refers to a rest in glory, the everlasting Sabbatism of Heaven, which is the repose and perfection of nature and grace too, where the people of God shall enjoy the end of their faith and the object of all their desires."

Matthew Henry is saying that the real Sabbath is, first, our salvation, and, second, eternity, where we enjoy everything that Jesus Christ has purchased for us. Before returning to Numbers chapter 15, remember Exodus chapter 31, verses 14 and 15: whoever did not keep the Sabbath was to be put to death.

The Death Penalty for Sabbath Violation

The penalty for Sabbath violation has not been nullified. The man who picked up sticks on the Sabbath was put in the ward. God said he was to be executed: take him out and stone him. And that is

exactly what they did. Why was this man stoned to death for picking up sticks, in all probability to cook with so they might have something to eat? God had said, “You’re not to do any work, period. You are to abide in your place. You’re to stay there.” This man was saying, “I have no regard for God. I have no regard for His commands. I’m going to do what I want to do. This is my own deed. This is my own needs. This is my own work.”

He was not only refusing God’s rest; he was refusing God’s redemption. God said he was to be executed. Listen carefully: the death penalty for violating God’s Sabbath has not been nullified. If you do not believe that, try dying one time without Jesus Christ, and you will find out. Jesus Christ is God’s Sabbath. Jesus Christ is God’s rest. Jesus Christ is our redemption. Jesus Christ said it in Proverbs 8:35-36: “For whosoever findeth me findeth life, and shall obtain favour of the Lord. But he that sinneth against me wrongeth his own soul: all they that hate me love death.”

Now turn to 2 Thessalonians chapter 1, beginning with verse 7. This shows that the death penalty for violating God’s Sabbath has not been nullified, since Jesus Christ is God’s Sabbath. The apostle says, “And to you who are troubled”—those who are persecuted, afflicted, and tormented because they are Christians—“rest, rest with us.”

When the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of His power, when He shall come to be glorified in His saints, and to be admired in all them that believe, because our testimony among you was believed in that day.

“And to you who are troubled, rest with us.” When our Lord Jesus Christ returns, He will come in flaming fire, taking vengeance on those that know not God and obey not the gospel of Jesus Christ. The death penalty is still applicable for those who violate God's Sabbath, and God's Sabbath is the Lord Jesus Christ.

If Israel had observed the Sabbaths as God had demanded, they would have understood, I believe, the spiritual impact and the

eternal Sabbath that was to be brought to them through the Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ. But when you refuse God's rest and God's redemption, you heap unto yourself judgment and death.

Jesus Christ is God in the flesh. Jesus Christ is our Sabbath, our redemption, and our rest. Jesus Christ is our all in all. We do not celebrate the creation Sabbath, the Hebrew Sabbath, or the Canaan Sabbath. We celebrate the eternal Sabbath accomplished by the Lord Jesus Christ and given to us by His grace and mercy.

Father, we ask in the name of Jesus Christ that You would help us today. Teach us, we pray, and build us up in the most holy faith. Give us grace, Lord, that we may serve Thee acceptably with reverence and godly fear. Teach us to rest in Thee, to look to Thee, and to trust only in the finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ, in whose name we pray. Amen.

CHAPTER 13

Promises Of The Law

Part 13

The Fifth Commandment

Introduction to the Fifth Commandment

This is message number 13 on the promises of the law, and today we begin with the fifth commandment. We begin with it because it will be presented in two parts; I will have to finish it next Lord's Day. Deuteronomy chapter 5, verse 16, says: "Honor thy father and thy mother, as the Lord thy God hath commanded thee; that thy days may be prolonged, and that it may go well with thee, in the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee."

It is surprising to discover that almost everyone, saved or unsaved, can quote the fifth commandment. Many can quote it word for word, and some almost word for word. It is one of the most well-known of the Ten Commandments. As I pointed out in the very first message, this is the first commandment with a specific promise. All the other commandments have promises that are implied, but this one has a specific promise attached to it.

There are three passages where this occurs. The first is Exodus 20, where you have the first giving of the law. Exodus 20:12 says, “Honor thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee.” When you get to Deuteronomy, it is the second giving of the law. The word Deuteronomy comes from deuteros, meaning second, and nomos, meaning law. Deuteronomy 5:16 says, “Honor thy father and thy mother, as the Lord thy God hath commanded thee; that thy days may be prolonged, and that it may go well with thee, in the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee.” The third passage is Ephesians chapter 6. These are the three passages in which this commandment and its promise occur.

Ephesians 6 says, “Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right. Honor thy father and mother; which is the first commandment with promise; that it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth.” In Exodus 20, the Bible promised long life upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee. In Deuteronomy 5:16, He says that thy days may be prolonged, that it may go well with thee in the land which the Lord God giveth thee. But when you get to Ephesians 6, it talks about that you may live long upon the earth. So very clearly, when you look at the Fifth Commandment, the Fifth Commandment was not given just to those individuals who were about to enter into Canaan land.

The Commandment's Relevance for All Believers

In fact, the Apostle Paul takes this commandment and applies it in Ephesians 6. There are so many people who try to say, “The law has been nullified, the law has been negated, the law has been done away with.” Obviously, the Apostle Paul did not know that, because he took the Fifth Commandment and applied it there to the Ephesian believers and consequently to others as well.

Calvin made this observation: “Human society cannot be maintained in its integrity unless children modestly submit themselves to their parents, unless those who are set over others by God's ordinance are reverently honored.” Without obedience, without honor, and without reverence, society is going to disintegrate. The reason society is going to disintegrate is because

the family is going to dissolve. In other words, if you do not have honor, reverence, and obedience in the family, you are not going to end up with honor, reverence, and obedience in society.

When you stop and think about the home, someone has to rule. Someone has to be in charge. Someone has to set the limits, give the orders, and say, “This is how it's going to be.” If the husband is not going to do it, then the wife's going to do it.

If a husband or wife will not do it, then the children are going to do it. And if the children will not do it, the dog is going to do it. Somebody is going to do it. But the truth of the matter is that what Calvin said is absolutely right: without obedience, honor, and reverence, you are not going to have a family. You are not even going to have society.

He said, "Honor thy father and thy mother." Let me give you the Hebrew word for honor. It is kabod, and it literally means to honor, to be honorable; it means glory, and it means heavy. I am going to deal with that word a little later. When you look in Ephesians chapter 6 and verse 2, where he says, "Honor thy father and thy mother," the Greek word for honor is timao. It literally means to honor, to value, to revere, to venerate, and to hold in honor.

Word Studies on Honor and Prolonged Days

Now, let me give you another word. In Exodus chapter 20 and also in Deuteronomy chapter 5, he says that your days may be prolonged. The Hebrew word for prolonged is arak, and it literally means to prolong, to lengthen, to draw out, and to make long and continue long. In the New Testament He says, "Honor thy father and thy mother, which is the first commandment with promise, that your days may be long upon the earth." The Greek word there is makrochronios, or makros chronios. Makros means that which is long or lengthy. Chronios is from chronos, time. Literally, he says that you may live a long time—an extended period of time. Three times Scripture says, "Honor thy father and thy mother, that thy days may be long," or lengthened or prolonged, upon the land or upon the earth.

I have two questions for you. Does every single godly person live to a ripe old age? No. Does every single wicked person get cut down in the prime of his life? The answer is no. Not everyone. Some do live a long life; others do indeed get cut down.

General Promise and God's Sovereignty

When God says that your days may be long upon the earth or that your days may be long upon the land, this is what you and I would call a general promise. A general promise does not mean that every single individual who reads this and obeys this is going to have what you and I would call a long life or a blessed life. We have to take into consideration not only God's sovereignty, but God's will and God's decree for every individual. There are reasons given to us even in the Bible that sometimes the godly are cut off at an early stage in their life.

For instance, Isaiah 57:1 gives a reason why many of the godly, merciful individuals are indeed taken home early: "The righteous perisheth, and no man layeth it to heart: and merciful men are taken away, none considering that the righteous is taken away from the evil to come." God sometimes takes His own home early to keep them from experiencing, or going through, the evil that is to come. That is what He says in Isaiah 57:1.

A general promise is one that is limited to and by God's sovereignty and divine will for individuals. It does not mean that every individual is going to turn out to be exactly like that. For instance, Proverbs 18:22 is what you and I would call a general promise: "Whoso findeth a wife findeth a good thing, and obtaineth favour of the Lord." Now there are some men who found a wife but did not find a good thing. There are some women who found a husband who was not a good thing either. So obviously, that would depend upon God's blessings upon that man and that woman. Proverbs 19:14 tells us very clearly that houses and lands are the inheritance of a father, but a prudent wife is from the Lord. So that is a general promise, and there have been many, many men who found good and godly wives.

There have been some who did not find those, and likewise, vice versa with the wife finding the husband.

When you get to Proverbs 23:13, here is another general promise: “Withhold not correction from the child: for if thou beatest him with the rod, he shall not die. Thou shalt beat him with the rod, and shalt deliver his soul from hell.” Does that mean that every child who is ever beaten with a rod is going to heaven? Of course not. If it meant that, one of the best ways to evangelize would be to take a rod and go out and beat the devil out of everybody. But what it does mean is this: with God's blessings upon the means that God has ordained, God will make those means effectual. Usually, those means, being made effectual by God in His grace and mercy, will ultimately turn out to that child's conversion.

So God is saying that not every child beaten with a rod is going to heaven; that is for sure. Obviously, this is what you and I would call a general promise. Not every individual who obeys his parents perfectly is going to have a long life. Generally speaking, that would be true, but there will be exceptions because of God's sovereignty and God's will for individuals. I am thinking of the young man for whom we just prayed. He is twenty-four years old, has been a godly young man for years and years, and yet here he is suffering and at the point of death. It is indeed a general promise.

Divine Sovereignty and Human Responsibility

Now, let me give you two thoughts and try to tie them together. When we are talking about the fifth commandment and living long upon the earth, divinely speaking, our days are numbered and the dates of our deaths are set. Just as God appointed the day of our birth, He has also appointed the day of our death. In Job 14:1, the Scripture says, “Man that is born of a woman is of few days, and full of trouble.”

That is a mouthful, and it is true: "Man that is born of a woman is of few days, and full of trouble. He cometh forth like a flower, and is cut down: he fleeth also as a shadow, and continueth not. And dost thou open thine eyes upon such an one, and bringest me into judgment with thee? Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? not one. Seeing his days are determined, the number of his months are with thee, thou hast appointed his bounds that he cannot pass."

Note that our days are determined, the number of our months is with God, and God has appointed our bounds that we cannot pass. Neither one of us is going to live one second longer than God has divinely decreed and ordained for us. That is all there is to it. Yet, humanly speaking, our days may be either lengthened by obedience or shortened by disobedience. Now you are going to ask, How can that be?

First, let me show you the Scriptures. In Exodus chapter 15, verse 26, God is giving a promise of blessings of health to those who obey Him: "And said, If thou wilt diligently hearken to the voice of the Lord thy God, and wilt do that which is right in his sight, and wilt give ear to his commandments, and keep all his statutes, I will put none of these diseases upon thee, which I have brought upon the Egyptians: for I am the Lord that healeth thee."

God said, If you just obey Me, you are going to have good health. You are not going to have to worry about all these horrible diseases. That is it. Here is a very good promise, not only of longevity in one sense of the word, but of good health as well. Look in your Bibles to 1 Kings chapter 3. Here is what God told Solomon. In 1 Kings chapter 3, verse 14, God spake to Solomon and said: “And if thou wilt walk in my ways, to keep my statutes and my commandments, as thy father David did walk, then I will lengthen thy days.” So here is the lengthening of the days. Turn right over to Psalm 91, and look at verse 16. Psalm 91 and verse 16 says: “With long life will I satisfy him, and shew him my salvation.” So with long life. Then turn to the book of Proverbs, chapter 3, and look at verses 1 and 2.

Proverbs 3, verses 1 and 2. God says, "My son, forget not my law; but let thine heart keep my commandments: For length of days, and long life, and peace, shall they add to thee." Note if you would, length of days and long life and peace will be added for obedience. Skip down to verse 16, same chapter: "Length of days is in her right hand; and in her left hand riches and honour." Now if you would turn right over to Proverbs 10 and look in verse 27. Proverbs 10 and verse 27, the Word of God says, "The fear of the Lord prolongeth days: but the years of the wicked shall be shortened." So on the one hand the fear of the Lord prolongs or lengthens one's days, and the lack of the fear of the Lord shortens one's days. Now, if you would turn to 1 Peter

chapter 3 in the New Testament and look if you would please at verses 10 through 12. 1 Peter chapter 3 and verses 10 through 12. Here again is a very excellent truth in light of everything that we've just been reading. So 1 Peter chapter 3, notice if you would verse 10: "For he that will love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile:

Let him eschew evil, and do good; let him seek peace, and ensue it. For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers: but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil." So now God says if you want to love life, if you want to see good days, if you want to be blessed, then you keep your mouth from evil, your tongue from evil, your life from evil. Do not be able to swallow it, spit it out, have nothing to do with it. In other words, simply obey. Now, let me just show you the opposite just momentarily, just a couple of passages. I want you to go back to Psalm 89, because just like the Bible is talking about how obedience can lengthen our days and bless our days, the Bible also talks about the fact that sin and disobedience can shorten our days. So in Psalm 89 and verse 45, look what the Bible says. Psalm 89 verse 45: "The days of his youth hast thou shortened: thou hast covered him with shame."

"The days of his youth hast thou shortened." Then if you would look in Psalm 102 and verse 23. Psalm 102, verse 23. Here it is again. Psalm 102, verse 23: "He weakened my strength in the way; he shortened my days."

Daniel had interpreted Nebuchadnezzar's dream, and finally, in Daniel chapter 4, verse 27, he said, "Wherefore, O king, let my counsel be acceptable unto thee, and break off thy sins by righteousness, and thine iniquities by shewing mercy to the poor; if it may be a lengthening of thy tranquillity." So what did Daniel just say? He said, look, if you want to live longer, you need to repent. You need to quit committing these sins. If you repent and turn to God, it may be a lengthening of thy days. Then there is that famous passage in Proverbs 29:1: "He, that being often reproved hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy."

I have just made two statements. Number one, divinely speaking, the day of our birth and the day of our death is set. We are not going

to go one second beyond what God has ordained. Secondly, humanly speaking, our days may be lengthened by obedience, or they may be shortened by disobedience. Now you are going to ask the question, well, how do we reconcile these two? The answer is this: the God that ordained the end also ordained the means to the end.

The means to living a long life are means of obedience, honoring God, and worshiping Him. The means to live a shortened life is to dishonor God and disobey God. So God, who knows the end from the beginning, ordained our end because He knew the means that we were going to use and the means that we were going to take.

What you see here is what you and I would call not only divine sovereignty, but also human responsibility. Moses, the man of God, wrote in Psalm 90, verse 10, "The days of our years are threescore years and ten," 70. Many of us are already over 70. We need to be thankful. Some youngins in here are not over 70. But notice: "and if by reason of strength they be fourscore years," that is 80 years, "yet is their strength labour and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away."

Stop and think about this. Even if you live to be eighty, ninety, or one hundred, you still cannot do the things you used to do when you were twenty or twenty-one. You remember when David invited—not his name just slipped my mind—the old man to come into the palace, and he said, "Can I taste anymore? I'm eighty years old. Can I taste food? Can I enjoy the music? Can I hear?" Well, no, no, no. He said, "You take this one. I can't go over there."

So even if we live to eighty years of age, that does not mean anything. Ninety does not mean anything. One hundred does not mean anything, because we are gone. When you compare ninety or one hundred years to eternity, there is no comparison at all. But notice verse 11: "Who knoweth the power of thine anger? even according to thy fear, so is thy wrath." Then he says, "So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom."

Moses is saying that we need to understand that the day of our death has been set and that, humanly speaking, we have a responsibility to obey God, honor Him, and worship Him. The wise thing is to use what God has given us to lengthen our life. Lack of

wisdom will shorten our life. Clearly, then, all these things work together, because God not only ordained the end; He ordained the means to the end as well.

Economic Honesty and Long Life

Here we see both the sovereignty of God and human responsibility. In speaking of the Fifth Commandment and the lengthening of life, there are other Scriptures that deal with long life and are actually references to the Fifth Commandment. Usually they are not viewed that way, but they are in reality. The Bible often gives a summary of the Ten Commandments. A summary does not replace the whole; it simply summarizes.

For instance, turn to Matthew 22. Beginning in verse 35, we read: “Then one of them, which was a lawyer, asked him a question, tempting him, and saying, Master, which is the great commandment in the law?” Stop and think about the Ten Commandments. Which would you say is the great commandment in the law?

Our Lord answered, verse 37: "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 neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets."

Isn't it interesting that when our Lord was asked which was the greatest commandment, He did not quote one of the ten. He summarized the Ten Commandments with biblical love. The first is, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, all thy mind, and all thy soul. That would take care of the first four commandments. The second is, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. That would take care of commandments number five through ten, the last six commandments. Our Lord was therefore summarizing. You remember Romans 13:10: "Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law."

Our Lord reveals that there is such a thing as biblical love, and that biblical love is what we would call a summary of the law. We can summarize another principle in this way: Do unto others as you would have them do unto you. If you want people to treat you right

and honestly, then you have to treat other people right and honestly as well.

The fifth commandment, when it deals with honor and with a long life, reaches every aspect of our lives. The first illustration connected with a long life, and with the fifth commandment, is found in Deuteronomy 25:13: "Thou shalt not have in thy bag divers weights, a great and a small. Thou shalt not have in thine house divers measures, a great and a small. But thou shalt have a perfect and just weight, a perfect and just measure shalt thou have:

“That thy days may be lengthened in the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee. For all that do such things, that is, have dishonest weights and measures, and all that do unrighteously, are an abomination unto the Lord thy God.” The Bible is telling us that the monetary and economic activities of an individual, a family, a society, and a nation are extremely important, and connected with this is longevity, or long life.

It does matter how we make money. It does matter how we treat other people in making that money. Our economic activity is so important that the promise of long life is attached to the commandment for those who obey. Conversely, if we disobey, our lives are going to be shortened. I am sure that this applies not only to individuals, families, societies, and states, but to nations as well.

Dishonest money is theft, and it is a violation of God's law. This brings me to an old Latin proverb that many of you have heard, perhaps not in Latin but certainly in English: caveat emptor. It simply means, “Let the buyer beware.” When you buy that used car, used clothing, or whatever else, you had better be careful that you do not get hooked, skunked, gypped, or conned. Caveat emptor: let the buyer beware.

However, that is one-sided. In Deuteronomy chapter 25, verse 13, He said, “Thou shalt not have in thy bag divers weights, a great and a small. Thou shalt not have in thine house divers measures, a great and a small. But thou shalt have a perfect and just weight, a perfect and just measure shalt thou have.” The seller has the same responsibility to be honest as the buyer. If I am buying from Gary and Gary is honest, then I do not have to beware. Likewise, if I am

selling and he is buying, and I am honest, he does not have to beware. God is talking about a just weight and a just measure. Fraud in weights and measures is fraudulent money, and it is theft. Biblical money is always by weight, and constitutional money is by weight as well.

Do you remember when Abraham bought the cave of Machpelah to bury Sarah, his wife, in? He bought it from Ephron the Hittite. Ephron had said it was worth 400 shekels of silver. Genesis 23, verse 19, says, "Abraham weighed to Ephron the silver, which he had named in the audience of the sons of Heth, four hundred shekels of silver, current money with the merchant." He weighed 400 shekels of silver. Money according to the Bible is always by weight.

So if I were to ask you, what is a dollar? Most people have no idea. If I were to pick something up like this and someone says, "Oh, that's $20," it is not. It is 20 Federal Reserve notes, and a note is an obligation. It's a promise to pay; it's a debt. It is not a dollar. It is not real money.

Alice and I were at a restaurant, and after we had finished eating, I went up to pay. A little girl was behind the cash register, and no one else was there. I thought I would have some fun. I said to her, “I’ve got a real problem.” She asked, “What is it?” I said, “Well, I’ve eaten your food, and I have no money to pay you.” She said, “Well, that is a problem.”

“I know it,” I said. “I do have some Federal Reserve notes.” She said, “We don’t take those.” I said, “I really have a problem. You had better call your manager.” When the manager came, I explained that I had eaten their food, had no money, and had offered Federal Reserve notes, which they did not take. He said, “That’s right. We don’t take those.”

I reached into my pocket and pulled out some of these. The little girl said, “That’s money.” I said, “No, ma’am, this is not money. These are Federal Reserve notes. It’s a promise. It’s a debt.” She asked, “Why do we call it money if it’s not money?” I said, “That’s because we are ignorant of the Bible and ignorant of the Constitution.” She looked at me and said, “That’s the sweetest I’ve ever been called stupid in my entire life.”

When you talk about a dollar, the Coinage Act of 1792 defines a dollar, and that definition has never been changed. According to the Act, a dollar is 371.25 grains of pure silver. When they set the rate of ounces of silver in a dollar, they also regulated it in reference to gold, fifteen to one. It took fifteen grains of silver to equal one grain of gold.

Biblical money and constitutional money are always by weight. In the 1700s, everyone knew what a dollar was because everyone referred to the Spanish milled dollar, a round silver coin of a certain weight. A dollar is a unit of measurement, like a square foot, an inch, a bushel, or a quart. You would not ask a store for a quart without being asked, "A quart of what?" You would say, "A quart of milk." A dollar is a dollar of what? It is a dollar of silver or a dollar of gold—a unit of measurement, just as twelve inches is a foot.

The Word of God is saying that we have to be honest in our money. "Thou shalt not have in thine house divers measures, a great and a small." A measure deals with capacity, both of liquid and dry. What God is demanding is that, whatever we are dealing with—weights or measures—it has to be absolutely honest. God condemns fraud. For instance, in Isaiah 1 and verse 22, God says, "Thy silver is become dross, thy wine mixed with water."

If I had a gallon of wine to sell and thought I could double my money by pouring half into another gallon jug, filling both with water, and selling them for a gallon of wine each, what would I have done? I would have defrauded and stolen. That is not an honest measure. The same thing applies to coinage. When coins that are supposed to be silver are made with nickel and copper, that is fraud.

Did you know that one of the nicknames for Henry VIII of England was Old Copper Nose? He took a copper coin, covered it with a thin layer of silver, and tried to pass it off as pure silver. When the coin was in someone's pocket or was picked up, the thumb went to the middle, where Henry's face was. The silver rubbed off around his nose, and the copper showed through. Thus, he was nicknamed Old Copper Nose.

It was indeed theft. God places a curse upon those who deal fraudulently with their economics. This relates to the family. A

family cannot exist without economics, without money as you and I know it. When a man, a family, a society, or a government changes, cheapens, defrauds, adulterates, or misleads, it is theft. God says, "For all that do such things, and all that do unrighteously, are an abomination unto the Lord thy God."

When we talk about having long life, it is not just how we treat our parents; it is how we interact in our economic activity in that family and home as well. There are three promises, and they are all interrelated. Deuteronomy 22, verses 6 and 7, says, "If a bird's nest chance to be before

Respect for Animal Families and Long Life

The passage says, "thee in the way in any tree, or on the ground, whether they be young ones, or eggs, and the dam sitting upon the young, or upon the eggs, thou shalt not take the dam with the young: But thou shalt in any wise let the dam go, and take the young to thee; that it may be well with thee, and that thou mayest prolong thy days." Note the promise: "that thou mayest prolong thy days."

How does a mother bird and her young relate to the fifth commandment? If you are walking along and see a bird sitting on a nest containing either young birds or eggs, you must let the dam, the mother bird, go. You may take the eggs or the young, but you cannot take both.

This same principle appears several times in the Old Testament. Leviticus 22:28 says, "And whether it be cow or ewe," that is, a sheep, "ye shall not kill it and her young both in one day." If you happen to have a hankering for veal and have a young calf in the stall, God says you may kill it. But you cannot kill the calf and the cow on the same day. If you want a lot of meat, you can kill the cow, but you have to leave the calf.

Why would God tell you in Deuteronomy 22 that, if you see the mother bird sitting on the nest, you have to let her go and may take the eggs or the young? Obviously, if you took the mother bird and left the young or the eggs, they would die. That would be killing both of them on the same day, which is forbidden.

Long life is connected right here. These passages are not teaching what we would simply call humanitarian attitudes toward animals. It is true that the Bible says in Proverbs 12:10, “The righteous man regardeth the life of his beast: but the tender mercies of the wicked are cruel.” Most of you know that Alice and I nursed a young calf for a week, trying to save its life, but the calf died. The calf had a quilt, a house, a pillow, massages, antibiotics, and food. When its joints were swollen, adults put turmeric compresses on them.

Why? I am going to show you something. What God is demanding in Deuteronomy 22 and Leviticus is not merely a humanitarian attitude toward animals. He is demanding respect for the families of animals. If you let the dam go and kept the young, fine. If you killed the dam and the young died, that was a violation of God’s law. Killing a cow and her calf on the same day is a violation of God’s law.

God is giving us an argument from the lesser to the greater. If God commands and expects us to honor the families of animals, how much more does He command and demand that we respect the families of humans? If you cannot harm an animal’s family, God certainly forbids you to harm a man’s family. Respect for creation means more than kindness to animals; it means recognizing that God is the Creator and has created everything for a purpose—every animal and every insect. I do not understand roaches and mosquitoes, but there is a purpose in God’s plan for roaches, mosquitoes, gnats, fleas, and flies. Perhaps it is to harass us because of our sin and the fall; I do not know. But God certainly has a purpose. Life can only be taken on God’s terms. God is the giver and author of life.

I get upset when people maliciously and wickedly kill something merely for the sake of killing it, when it posed no danger and they are not going to use it for food. Twice within the last several months, Alice and I have found four or five wild pigs shot and left in the ditch.

Now, I realize feral pigs can destroy crops. I understand that. But where these pigs were, there were no crops. People just killed them, just to be killing them. I've seen tire tracks where people have left the main road just to run over and mash a big old gopher tortoise. All he does is eat grass. He doesn't hurt anybody. Why in the world would anybody do something like that?

Applications and Conclusion

When you understand the fifth commandment, and the illustrations that God is giving us, especially in relationship to longevity and long life, these passages are teaching us the evil of tampering with the birth process. It is unbiblical to destroy life simply to destroy life. Abortion is wicked and wrong and ungodly. Why can we kill a baby just as easy as pie? Because everybody kills everything else just as easy as pie. They care more for a baby eagle than they do for a child.

Look at infanticide. Look at euthanasia. Look at the elderly, how they're treated. If you want to understand where we are today, it is because we do not understand God's law. We do not apply God's law, and the wickedness that we see today is an example of a denial of God's law.

Turn in your Bibles to the book of Hosea, Hosea chapter 10. Look at verse 14. Here is an interesting statement. Let's begin reading with verse 13. He's talking to his people. He says this: "Ye have plowed wickedness, ye have reaped iniquity; ye have eaten the fruit of lies: because thou didst trust in thy way, in the multitude of thy mighty men. Therefore shall a tumult arise among thy people, and all thy fortresses shall be spoiled, as Shalman spoiled Betharbel in the day of battle:"

“The mother was dashed in pieces upon her children.” I understand war, fighting, and killing. But usually women are not fighters, and children are not fighters. Yet here was a war where everyone was so wicked that they dashed the mother in pieces upon her own children. They killed mother and child in one day.

Look in the book of Amos, chapter 1, verse 13: “Thus saith the Lord; For three transgressions of the children of Ammon, and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof; because they have ripped up the women with child of Gilead, that they might enlarge their border.”

What did they do? They took pregnant mothers, ripped them in pieces, and ripped the child out just so they could have more land. What are we doing in foreign countries? Bombing everybody just to have a bigger empire. It is the same principle. The barbarism exhibited today toward our children, our babies, the elders, and

others is a consequence of not understanding and applying the law of God.

Life cannot be taken except on God's terms. We may kill animals for food and clothing, in self-defense, or if they are hindering dominion. But if they are not attacking us, being eaten or worn, harming dominion, or hindering dominion, why would you kill them? When I saw those baby pigs dead in the ditch, I said, “Well, I just hope one day whoever did that goes hungry.” They might want that pig one day.

I might not like to eat pork, but I would eat it before I starved. I would eat a lot of things before I starved. I am simply saying that we are where we are because we have not understood or applied the law of God. God is demanding that we honor our parents. That honor extends into the economic realm, and it also extends into the animal realm.

Long life is promised for obedience in these three areas. What does it mean to truly honor your parents? It means far more than saying, “Yes, ma’am,” and “No, ma’am,” and “Yes, sir,” and “No, sir.” If you really want to know what it means to honor your parents, it requires more than those outward expressions. I do want to make two quick applications. The first one is this: long life is a blessing. A long life affords us a greater opportunity to prepare for eternity.

It enables us to be more useful. It furnishes us a longer opportunity to examine and to rejoice in the works of God on the earth. It is not improper to desire a long life. I will be honest with you: I want to live a long life. I do not mind living to be one hundred as long as I can keep preaching and teaching. The reason I want to live long is simply so I can keep serving the Lord, keep teaching, and keep preaching. It is just that simple. It is a blessing to understand that God does indeed give long life in His will to those who obey Him.

The second one is this: we have to understand that our attitudes toward economics and our attitude toward animals are just as important as our attitude toward our families. In fact, the fifth commandment is very extensive. For instance, Leviticus 19:32 says, “Thou shalt rise up before the hoary head, and honour the face of the

old man, and fear thy God: I am the Lord." Why are we to rise up before the hoary head and honor the face of the old man? Because God is the Lord our God. In other words, if you learn to respect your parents, you should learn to respect any of the elderly, especially those who are elderly in the way of righteousness. It is an extension of "honour thy father and thy mother" to honor anyone who is elderly.

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we bow to Thee. We thank You for Your Word. We thank You for Your truth. Teach us, build us up in the most holy faith, and make us holy and godly and obedient. In the name of Jesus Christ, we ask. Amen.

CHAPTER 14

Promises Of The Law

Part 14

Introduction and Review of the Fifth Commandment

This is part two of the fifth commandment. In Deuteronomy 5:16, God says, “Honor thy father and thy mother, as the Lord thy God hath commanded thee, that thy days may be prolonged, that it may go well with thee in the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee.” I pointed out last week that this promise actually occurs two other times in the Bible. The first time is Exodus 20:12, where God says, “Honor thy father and thy mother that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee.” The third time it occurs is in Ephesians 6:1–3, where God says, “Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. Honor thy father and thy mother, which is the first commandment with promise, that it may be well with thee and that thou mayest live long on the earth.”

This promise is what you and I would call a general promise, in that it is not a promise to all without distinction. There have been many godly young people who died and did not live to a ripe old age. And there have been many wicked who did not die and did live to a

ripe old age. So we have to understand that when God gives a general promise like this, it does not apply to all indiscriminately. It always involves His will for each individual.

I also pointed out the fact that no one can exceed the day of his death that has been set by God. God has given us the day of our death. It has been decreed just like the day of our birth. But, on the other hand, humanly speaking, we can either increase our days or decrease our days depending upon our obedience or disobedience. The answer to that is the fact that God has everything figured in. He knows the end from the beginning. He knows whether or not we will be obedient or disobedient.

And so He has designed the use of the means as well as the end. As we apply the means that God has ordained, obviously our days will either be lengthened or our days will be shortened.

I demonstrated from Scripture a number of passages relating to this. Proverbs chapter 10 and verse 27 says, "The fear of the Lord prolongs days, but the years of the wicked shall be shortened." Although the Fifth Commandment gives us a promise of long life, two other passages of Scripture also give us the same promise, and they are related to the Fifth Commandment.

The first one, of course, is found in Deuteronomy 25, verses 13 through 16, which speaks about honesty in economics. Having an honest weight and an honest measure, and being honest in our dealings with each other, brings this promise: God says there is a promise of long life. The second passage is Deuteronomy 22, especially verses 6 and 7, where God speaks about animals and the families of animals. Based upon how we treat animals, there is also a promise of long life—that is, if we honor their families.

So, arguing from the lesser to the greater, if God commands us and demands that we honor the families of animals, how much more does He command and demand that we honor the families of humans? It is just simply that simple.

The Hebrew word for honor in the Old Testament is kabod, and it literally means honor, honorable, glory, and heavy. In the New Testament, Ephesians chapter 6 and verse 2 uses the word timao,

which literally means to honor, to value, to revere, to venerate, and to hold in honor.

There is a passage related to the Fifth Commandment that not only demands honor for our parents, but also honor and respect for what you and I would call old age, the elderly, and the honorable. It is found in Leviticus chapter 19, verse 32: "Thou shalt rise up before the hoary head, and honor the face of the old man, and fear thy God: I am the Lord."

Honoring the Elderly as an Extension of the Commandment

God says, “Thou shalt rise up before the hoary head, thou shalt honor the face of the old man, and fear thy God.” In other words, outward respect for old age is intimately connected with the fear of God. Old age is a singular blessing. The fact that God's providence and blessing has allowed someone to live to a ripe old age denotes God's blessings upon that individual, and that individual is to be honored.

John Gill, the great Baptist expositor, wrote: “Thou shalt rise up before the hoary head, or before old age, which may be discerned by the hoary or gray hairs upon the head. That is before a gray-headed man or an old man. And one was reckoned so when he was 70 years of age. For so it is said, one of 60 years is arrived to old age, and one of 70 to gray hairs.”

One historian relates that, according to the tradition of the Hebrews, a young man was obliged to rise up when an ancient man or an older man was at a distance of four cubits from him, and to sit down again as soon as he had passed by, so that it might appear the action was done in honor to the old man. Among the Hebrews, as well as the heathen, it was reckoned an abominable wickedness, and even in some places a capital crime, if a young man did not rise up before an old man, or a boy before a bearded person.

Arguing from the lesser to the greater again, if God requires us to respect and honor the elderly, whom many times we do not know or would not know, how much more does He require us to honor and respect the parents whom we do know and whom we profess to love?

There is a passage in 1 Samuel chapter 2 and verse 30. Eli and his sons dishonored the Lord, and God cut off the line of Eli. But listen to what God said to Eli: "Wherefore the Lord God of Israel saith, I said indeed that thy house, and the house of thy father, should walk before me forever: but now the Lord saith, Be it far from me; for them that honor me I will honor, and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed."

God says that if we honor Him, submit to Him, and obey Him, He is going to honor us. But if we dishonor God, He is going to dishonor us. If we fail to give Him the honor and the glory that are due in His name, He will hold us in a very light estimation. So God requires us to honor not only our parents, but also the elderly. That is an extension of the fifth commandment.

What does it literally mean to honor thy father and thy mother? There are numerous principles in the Bible, but here are three. Ephesians chapter 6, beginning with verse 1, says, "Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right." He says, "Honor thy father and thy mother, which is the first commandment with promise, that it may be well with thee, and that thou mayest live long on the earth."

Obedience as a Component of Honor

Obviously the Apostle Paul did not believe that the law had been nullified or done away with. Nor did he believe that this was limited to those Hebrews as they went into the Canaan land, for he took that very same promise and applied it to all believers, especially the Ephesian believers in Ephesians chapter 6. "Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right.

“Honor thy father and thy mother.” Obedience is necessarily and essentially a part of honor. We honor our parents when we obey them. A disobedient child is a dishonorable child; he dishonors his parents by his disobedience and rebellion.

We honor our heavenly Father when we honor our earthly parents, and we dishonor our heavenly Father when we dishonor them. God, in His sovereign providence, gave us our parents and gave them authority over us. Therefore, if we want to honor our

heavenly Father, we have to honor our parents. If we dishonor our parents, we dishonor our heavenly Father.

In verse one, he says, “Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right.” The word “right” is the Greek word dikaios, which literally means that which is righteous, just, and right. In other words, when God says, “Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right,” He is saying, This is My will, this is what I approve of, and this is how you live pleasing unto Me. You do that which is just and righteous in My sight.

Part and parcel of a child’s obedience to God is obedience to his parents. A child does not necessarily mean someone only two, three, four, or five years old; it may mean someone fourteen and under, or fifteen and under.

When adults are saved, they may say, “I was a drunk and I quit drinking. I was a whoremonger and I quit running around.” But it is just as easy for God to save a child as an adult. When God saves a child, the child will not quit drinking, because he never started drinking, nor will he quit being a whoremonger, because he never was one. He is a child. But when God saves a child, there will be a difference in his life in reference to obedience to his parents and his attitude toward them, because this is one of the areas in which God demands that we obey Him. Therefore, if a child has been disobedient, he will have repentance in that area and become an obedient child as well.

It does not matter how smart a child is, how brilliant, or how intelligent that child is. God still requires that child to be in subjection to his parents. I have had people tell me, “But that child knows more than I do.” Well, that is immaterial. When our Lord was twelve years old, He went with His family to the feast in Jerusalem. They left, supposing that He was in the company, but He was not. He was in the temple, hearing and answering questions.

When Mary and Joseph discovered that He was not with them, they turned back sorrowing to find Him, and found Him in the temple. “When they saw him, they were amazed: and his mother said unto him, Son, why hast thou thus dealt with us? behold, thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing. And he said unto them, How is it

that ye sought me?" Wist ye not that I must be about My Father's business? And they understood not the saying which He spake unto them.

"And he went down with them, and came to Nazareth, and was subject unto them: but his mother kept all these sayings in her heart." Here is the Lord Jesus Christ at twelve years of age, God incarnate, the omniscient, omnipotent, omnipresent, sovereign God, and yet at twelve years of age He went back and was in submission and subjection to His parents. Obviously, intelligence has nothing to do with submission. God requires children to be in submission to their parents.

Let me quote 1 Timothy chapter 6 and verse 1. God says, "Let as many as servants that are under the yoke"—and, by the way, the word "servants" there is actually the word "slaves"—"so many servants as are under the yoke count their own masters worthy of all honor." Listen carefully: "that the name of God and his doctrine be not blasphemed." God says that a slave under the yoke, a servant under the yoke, has to count his master worthy of all honor. Why?

That the name of God and His doctrine be not blasphemed. If servants honor their masters, and in doing so honor God, how much more do children who honor their parents honor God as well? One way that a child worships and honors God is by being obedient to his parents.

While it is true that God demands that children be in subjection to their parents, that subjection is not absolute. No parent has the right or authority to ask his child to do anything unbiblical, ungodly, or unlawful. Although the Bible says, "Children, obey your parents in everything," that does not mean that I may say, "I don't have enough money to pay my bills this month. Take this gun and go out and rob a bank and give me the money." I have no authority to command my child to do that which is unlawful.

I cannot say to my child, "I'm upset with Francis. Take this gun and go over there and shoot him." If a parent asks a child to do that which is unbiblical and ungodly, the child should respond as the apostles responded to the rulers in Acts 5:29: "We ought to obey God rather than man." Although God requires children to be in

submission and subjection, He does not require it absolutely, in the sense that parents have authority to command a child to do that which is unbiblical.

The Limits of Obedience and Adult Children

Now here is the question: Does God demand that adult children continue to obey their parents? I am not talking about someone who is eighteen, twenty-one, or twenty-four and still living at home. My philosophy, which I believe is biblical, is this: If you are my child, in my home, eating my food, and under my protection, you are obligated to obey me regardless. I do not care whether you are twenty-five, fourteen, or three.

But what about someone who has left home, is married, and perhaps has children of his own? Are we required to obey, or are we not required to obey, as adult children? The answer is both yes and no. When we leave home and marry, we have begun a new home.

The husband is the head of that house, and the husband and wife have authority over the children of that house. In the strictest sense, you could say that we are not required to obey our parents in the sense that we now have a separate home and are parents ourselves. However, you have to learn this: your parents are always your parents. Their home is always their home, and your father is still the head of that house. It would often be wise for a married adult child to listen to the counsel, advice, and suggestions of his parents.

Remember, first, that they have lived longer than we have. Second, they have been through a whole lot more than we have. A wise child, even though he is an adult, will always try to honor and obey his parents when he can.

Let me explain this a little better. My father was a farmer, a Christian, a deacon, and a Sunday school teacher. He was also very authoritarian. When God saved me, I had a strong desire to know the Word of God. I put myself on a reading schedule: I read through the Old Testament every month and the New Testament every week. I did it over and over until I had a good grasp of Scripture.

My father would tell all his friends how well I knew the Bible and how well I could quote Scripture. Then I would go home, sit there

while my father was in his chair, and he would ask me a question. I would answer it and keep going. Before long, he would become huffy and upset. This happened two or three times, and one day it dawned on me: I was in his home. He was still my father; he was the head, and he was supposed to know more than his son. So when he asked me a question, I would answer it and shut up.

I would not say anything else. That did not mean I would not talk to him; it simply meant that when he asked me a specific question, I would give him a specific answer. The next thing I knew, he kept asking questions, I kept giving answers, and we were having a wonderful time of fellowship. His authority was not threatened. I was still his son, still in submission to him because I was answering his questions and giving him what he wanted.

All I am trying to say is this: wise parents are not going to interfere with an adult child's headship in his home. A wise parent is not going to come around and say, "Now, son, you do this with your family." No, they are simply not going to do that.

I will tell you this: I had one of the greatest fathers-in-law and mothers-in-law in the world. My mother-in-law, just one time in all our lives, tried to interfere with the discipline of my children. My children had done something, and I had already told them, "If you do this, I'm going to whip you." They did it, so I told them, "Go out and get a switch. I'm going to whip you." My mother-in-law looked at me and said, "Son, you ought not to whip those sweet little girls like that." I looked at her and said, "Granny, if I happened to be in a life when your children were being raised and I told you how to raise your children, you would be very, very upset with me. These are my children. I told them they were going to be disciplined. They are going to be disciplined." Thank you for your information. She never, ever said anything again.

I am simply saying that there comes a time when our obedience ceases in one sense, because we have our own families and our own headship. But when we go back to their house, we must remember that they are still our parents. It is still their home, and our father is still the head of that house. It is just that simple.

To give you one illustration, I went to see my father and my mother. I do not remember what I had to do; I was either going somewhere to preach or something, because I had on a suit, a shirt and tie, and brand-new wingtip shoes. Dad said, “Son, come with me. I want to show you the new hog pen that I built.” I said, “Sure.” I really did not have any interest in a new hog pen, but he wanted to show it to me, and I wanted to see it.

I jumped in the truck, and we rode across the pond dam. When we got across, there was already a hole in the fence. About fifteen or twenty little pigs had gotten out, and more were coming out. My dad turned off the truck, jumped out, and hollered, "Son, get in that hog pen and stop those hogs from getting out!" I said, "Yes, sir." I jumped into that hog pen wearing new wingtip shoes and a suit, and I stopped those hogs from getting out. Wingtip shoes can be cleaned, and so can a suit. But Dad was barking an order, and here I was, a grown child, married with children of my own and a preacher. I obeyed, and I am thankful I did.

Honoring Dishonorable Parents

There are times when you can say that obedience ceases, but a wise child will do what he can to obey. I understand, because I have been asked this question many times: What do you do with dishonorable parents? In one sense, it is true that to honor someone, they need to be honorable. But God says, "Children, obey your parents in the Lord," and, "Honor thy father and thy mother, which is the first commandment with promise."

There are mothers and fathers who are dishonorable—sinful, wicked, wrong, and vile. But that does not relieve you of your responsibility to obey God. God still requires you to honor your father and your mother. I know of one man, though I never met him, whose daughter I did know. He became a drunk, deserted his family, never provided for them, never took care of them, and never communicated with them. He simply lived the life of a drunkard.

One of those young women grew up, married, and had children of her own. When that father, who had deserted and refused to support her, came down with cancer and had no one to care for him, she took him into her home. She nursed him and cared for him until he died.

Thankfully, there was a very glorious reconciliation before his death. After he was dead and buried, she could say, "I honored my father," even though he was dishonorable in one sense of the word. We can honor our parents even when they are dishonorable. We have to do what is right, even if they do what is wrong.

Right Attitudes and the Condemnation of Cursing Parents

Secondly, obedience is not only connected with honor. We must understand that honoring our parents not only requires obedience, but it also requires attitudes and dispositions that would promote and lead to obedience. When someone has a defiant, rebellious attitude, obviously, that is not going to lead to obedience. I remember reading years ago about a little girl who was standing up in the car seat. And her mother kept telling her to sit down, sit down. This was well before the age of seat belts. And the little girl didn't want to sit down. She continued to stand. And finally the mother reached over and took the little girl's arm and snatched her down in the seat and said, "You sit there." And the little girl looked at her mother. She said, "I might be sitting down on the outside, but I'm standing up on the inside." That's a disposition of rebellion. In other words, we've got to understand that our attitudes do indeed affect our lives.

Let me show you. Do you realize such attitudes lead individuals to curse and smite and treat their parents with contempt? I want you to follow me. Look in your Bibles if you would to the book of Exodus chapter 21 and verse 15. Exodus 21 and verse 15. Look at what the Scripture says. Exodus 21 and verse 15, God says, "And he that smiteth his father or his mother shall be surely put to death." He that smiteth his father or his mother shall be surely put to death.

Now, the Hebrew word for "smite" here is nakah. And it means to smite, to hit, to strike, to wound, to beat, to scourge, to slay, and to kill.

Now, it's just merely striking a parent. Wounding a parent merits the death penalty. How much more would murdering a parent demand the death penalty? Skip down to verse 17 of Exodus 21: "And he that curseth his father or his mother shall surely be put to death."

Now the word "curse" here literally refers to despise and to treat lightly and to hold in contempt and to slight and to count them as mere trifling. In other words, it is to treat your parents as being despicable. Look, if you would please, in the book of Leviticus chapter 20 and verse 9. Leviticus 20 and verse 9. Leviticus 20 and verse 9, God says, "For everyone that curseth his father or his mother shall be surely put to death: he hath cursed his father or his mother;

"His blood shall be upon him." The word "curse" there is the same as in Exodus 21 and verse 17. Deuteronomy 27:16 says: "Cursed be he that setteth light by his father or his mother. And all the people shall say, Amen."

In this instance, the Hebrew word means to curse, to set light by, to undervalue, and despise. It speaks of an unspoken loathing, disdaining, or attitude of contempt toward the father and the mother. John Gill said this upon the verse:

"This, that secretly despises them in his heart and by looks, gestures, mocks them in a private manner, unseen by others. For if he publicly cursed them, that was cognizable by the civil magistrate, and he was to be put to death. This follows next, as in order of the Ten Commands, to that which respects the fear and worship of God, honoring parents being next to the glorifying of God, the Father of all, and the people shall say, Amen, and applaud the righteous sentence."

The word "Amen" means verily, verily, truly, truly, so be it, so be it. God says that we are not to lightly despise our parents. We are not to treat them with contempt. Proverbs 20:20 says, "Whoso curseth his father or his mother, his lamp shall be put out in obscure darkness." Obviously, bad attitudes are condemned by God. Proverbs 30:11 says, "There is a generation that curseth their father, and doth not bless their mother."

Let me give you something else to think about in light of cursing our parents: if we fail to bless them, we are cursing them. Cursing and blessing are opposites. He who is not grateful and he who is not thankful, and who is not willing to bless his parents, is in essence cursing his parents. Obviously, any attitude that would bring us to

loathing or contempt of our parents is condemned in Scripture. It is impossible to honor your father and your mother with an attitude that leads to contempt, despising them, and treating them lightly.

Now, this brings me to the third point today, and I want to spend the rest of my time on this. It is not just obedience that is implied in honor, and it is not just being or having what you and I would call an attitude that leads to submissiveness and obedience. In order to understand really and truly what it means to honor our parents, we have to also understand that God requires us to provide for them in their old age, when they are unable to provide for themselves.

I want you to turn to two passages, Matthew 15 and Mark chapter 7. In order to understand everything that we have just read from the Old Testament, I want you to see how our Lord applies this in the New Testament. We will read Matthew 15 first, and then turn right over to Mark chapter 7. Look at Matthew chapter 15, beginning at verse 1: “Then came to Jesus scribes and Pharisees, which were of Jerusalem, saying, Why do thy disciples transgress the tradition of the elders?”

SCRIPTURE READING - Matthew 15:3-6; Mark 7:5-13 (KJV)

Providing for Parents in Old Age

> For they wash not their hands when they eat bread. But He answered and said unto them, Why do ye also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition? For God commanded, saying, Honor thy father and mother: and, He that curseth father or mother, let him die the death. So our Lord is actually reinforcing everything that we just read in the Old Testament.
>
> But ye say, Whosoever shall say to his father or his mother, It is a gift, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me; and honor not his father or his mother, he shall be free. Thus have ye made the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition.
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> Now you want to know what He's talking about? Turn over to the book of Mark chapter 7, verse 5:
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> Then the Pharisees and scribes asked Him, Why walk not Thy disciples according to the tradition of the elders, but eat bread

> with unwashen hands? He answered and said unto them, Well hath Esaias prophesied of you hypocrites, as it is written, This people honoureth Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me. Howbeit in vain do they worship Me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men. For laying aside the commandment of God, ye hold the tradition of men, as the washing of pots and cups: and many other such like things ye do.
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> And He said unto them, Full well ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your own tradition. For Moses said, Honor thy father and thy mother; and, Whoso curseth father or mother, let him die the death: But ye say, If a man shall say to his father or mother, It is Corban, that is to say, a gift, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me; he shall be free. And ye suffer him no more to do ought for his father or his mother; making the word of God of none effect through your tradition, which ye have delivered: and many such like things do ye.

The point in both passages is that failure to honor your parents is essentially cursing them. It not only merits the death penalty, but also shows that failing to take care of them and help them is the same as cursing them.

According to the tradition of the Jews, here is a young man who is quite wealthy and well off, but he has elderly parents. Perhaps they are sickly, unable to work, and without food, clothing, or help. He has much wealth and money. All he has to do is say the word "Corban." The word means a gift or dedicated. He is saying that he has taken his wealth and money and dedicated it to God. How, then, could he use something dedicated to God for such a mundane purpose as feeding his elderly parents, buying them medicine, helping with their clothes, or assisting them in any way?

That did not stop him from using it for other purposes or for himself. He simply could not use it for his parents because it had been dedicated to God. Let me give you a quote so you can see that this is in line with what history has been saying. This is one of the eclectic notes: "The meaning is that a man had only to pronounce this word over anything, setting it aside to a divine use in order to

escape the obligation of giving it for the relief or comfort of his parents. Even when said in good faith, this contravenes the divine law since the duty to the parent takes precedence over the obligation to make offerings. The choice in such cases is not between God and man, but between two ways of serving God, the one formal and the other real. Offerings belong to the formal side of worship, whereas God is really served and worshiped in our human duties and affections."

It is not enough to say, "This is dedicated to God; I am going to give this as an offering." That may be a formal act of worship, but God is more honored when we, in reality and truth, do what He commands us to do. Honoring our parents means more than saying, "Yes, ma'am," "No, ma'am," "No, sir," and "Yes, sir." It means that we help them in their old age, support them, and take care of them when they are unable to take care of themselves.

We need to look at other Scriptures as well. In 1 Timothy 5:3-4, God says, "Honor widows that are widows indeed. But if any widow have children or nephews, let them learn first to show piety at home, and to requite their parents: for that is good and acceptable before God."

We need to learn to show piety at home. The word "piety" actually means godliness. We need to learn to show godliness at home. Piety begins in the home. Godliness begins in the home. Godliness does something: it requites parents. "But if any widow have children or nephews, let them learn first to show piety at home, and to requite their parents."

The word "requite" means to pay back. Godliness at home means that you learn to pay back your parents. Now, what does that mean? It means that your parents fed you when you could not feed yourself. They clothed you when you could not clothe yourself. They doctored you when you could not doctor yourself. They educated you when you could not educate yourself. In fact, the truth of the matter is, if it had not been for your parents, you would have died. You could do nothing by yourself as a little baby. God says, when it comes to pass that your parents are unable to take care of themselves, now you can requite them. You can pay them back.

You can do for them what they did for you. They fed you, clothed you, and took care of you. Now you take care of them. It is just that simple.

Look at verse 3 again: “Honor widows that are widows indeed. If any widow have children,” or nephews. What’s the next phrase? “Or nephews.” When it comes to family, it is not just the immediate family that is responsible for the elderly. It is even the extended family—nephews. I had an uncle who was elderly, he and his wife, and he loved horses. He had two horses, and he would always call me.

My father would say, “Son, my fence is down.” I would answer, “I’ll be up and fix the fence.” He lived over an hour away, but Alice and I would go up and fix it. He would call and say, “I’ve got a leak in my water line.” I would tell him, “I’ll come up and take care of it for you,” and I would. When my aunt died and he became a widower, Alice and I took care of him, whatever he needed.

I helped him with legal work, housework, and all kinds of work. When he finally moved closer to us, he also moved near my daughter and son-in-law, about a hundred yards away. I told them, “Now Uncle Frank is your responsibility. You’re close; you take care of him.” They did. They took care of him until he died. Of course, I still helped and visited him, but they took care of him until the end.

This is why I said, “If any have children or nephews.” In verse 16 of 1 Timothy chapter 5, he repeats it: “If any man or woman that believeth have widows, let them relieve them”—that is, take care of them—“and let not the church be charged; that it may relieve them that are widows indeed.”

My mother died at ninety. When my father died unexpectedly, Alice and I had driven twelve hours one way for me to reach a preaching engagement. We had no cell phone. When I arrived, the pastor said, “Your father has died. You need to go back home.” I turned around, drove twelve hours home, took care of my father, and buried him. My mother lived nearly twenty years after that. I called her every day and told her that I loved her. There may have been one or two days I did not call, only because I had no cell phone reception when we were out West.

Those would have been the exception and not the rule. But every day, whether I was home or away, I would always call my mother. When my father died, my sister, Alice, and I took care of my mother. When Alice's father died, we took her mother and took care of her. She was with us seventeen years. Fourteen of those years she lived right beside us; the last three, she lived in our home.

Now, I am going to show you a verse and let you know that God has some strong words for those who will not help their parents. In verse 8, he said, “But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel.” God says that if we will not take care of our own, we have denied the faith and are worse than an infidel.

One of the problems we have in this country is that our states and the federal government have stolen God's honor and God's glory. It is not the state's responsibility to take care of the elderly; it is our responsibility. It is not the Fed's responsibility; it is our responsibility. Since the government has taken over the welfare of the elderly, families are dissipating and dividing. Most people, even fifty to seventy-five or a hundred years ago, were born, lived, and died in the same house on the same property. When someone became sickly or elderly and could not take care of themselves, they simply moved in with a family member, and the family took

That was the normal standard procedure up until probably the early 1900s. Oftentimes we lose a blessing because we do not really apply the fifth commandment. Honor is more than saying, “Yes, ma’am” and “No, ma’am” and “Yes, sir” and “No, sir.” It involves not only obedience, but also an attitude and disposition of submission, a desire to honor, and taking care of our parents when they cannot take care of themselves.

The Promise of a Blessed Life and Final Applications

Look in Ephesians 6:1: “Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right.” That is righteous and just. But verse 2 says, “Honor thy father and thy mother, which is the first commandment with promise,” and, “That it may be well with thee, that thou mayest live long upon the earth.” Honoring our parents is not just a promise of

long life; it is the promise of a blessed life—that it may be well with thee. Things will be easy for you, light for you, and go well for you.

Have you ever wondered why we have so many problems and live such short lives? The answer could simply be that we do not truly understand, apply, and obey the fifth commandment. We are in trouble in this country and in our families. The Marxists, socialists, fascists, liberals, and leftists know that if you destroy the family, you have destroyed the country. The family is the basic unit, and when it is destroyed, so is everything else.

Let me make a couple of applications. First, those who truly honor their parents when they are young benefit greatly by listening, learning, being taught, and being guided by them. Do you remember the old adage, “Children should be seen and not heard”? It means that children would sit in and listen to the conversations of adults and their parents. They were seen, but not heard; they were there listening and learning.

Albert Barnes said, “Obedience to parents is connected with virtuous habits that are conducive to long life. It will make a child industrious, temperate, sober. It will lead him to restrain and govern his wild passions. It will lead him to form habits of self-government which will in future life save him from the snares of vice and temptations.” Here’s a second one. One of the greatest heartaches of parents

Children who will not listen and will not obey bring heartache to their parents. Most parents strongly desire to save their children from the sins, failures, and temptations they have endured. But unhappily, sometimes children will not listen. The two hardest lessons I ever learned in fifty-four years of preaching are these: number one, you cannot help everybody; and number two, sometimes those you cannot help are your own family and your own friends.

Children can be blessed by listening and obeying. Obedient children who honor their parents not only extend their lives, but also, I think, make their parents' lives more enjoyable. It is a joy to a parent to have an obedient child, a child who honors them as well.

When our Lord says in Ephesians 6 and verse 3, “that it may be well with thee,” He is teaching us that this present life is not to be overlooked in the gifts of God. The very fact that God enables us to enjoy life is His gift, and it is from His grace and mercy.

I realize that most of our parents are dead. But if your parents are still alive, even one of them, tell that parent how much you love and appreciate them. Tell them that you are thankful for your life, training, and everything else they gave you and taught you.

I do not care if your parent is deaf, in a coma, has dementia, or has Alzheimer's. Tell them anyhow. I have done studies and read that when a person is dying, the last thing to go is the hearing. They may not be able to respond, but they hear. I have read of individuals who were in comas for years, came out of the coma, and said that they heard everything that was going on. They were simply unable to respond.

I would tell my parent how much I love and appreciate them, regardless of their condition. I would make sure they knew, whether they understood or not. You would know that you told them. My sister had my mother at her house when she was dying. Barbara called me and said, “I don't think mother has too much longer to live.” My sister is a retired registered nurse, so I figured she knew what she was talking about. I called my girls, we got all the girls together, and we went over to see Mother.

I helped her sit up on the side of the bed, and she was able to talk to us. She knew who I was, who Alice was, and who all the girls were. After we visited for a little while, she looked at me and said, “I'm tired.” I said, “Well, let me help you lie down.” I caught her by the shoulders, moved her legs back up on the bed, and gently laid her back on her pillow. As I did, I looked her in the eyes and said, “I love you, mother.” She responded, “I love you, son.”

Then she went to sleep and never woke up. It has always been a real blessing to me that the last words I said to my mother were, “I love you,” and the last words she said to me were, “I love you.” So all I am trying to say is this: I do not care what condition the parent is in; if they are alive, tell them you love them. Tell them that you appreciate all they have done for you throughout your life. Honor thy

father and thy mother, which is the first commandment with promise, that it may be well with thee, and that thou mayest live long upon the earth.

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we bow to Thee this day. We thank You for Your Word and for Your truth. We ask that You help us, Lord, to obey Thee, honor Thee, honor our parents, and do that which is right. In the name of Jesus Christ, we ask and pray. Amen.

CHAPTER 15

Promises Of The Law

Part 15

The Sixth Commandment

Introduction to the Sixth Commandment

We are still in the series “The Promises of the Law,” number 15, dealing today with the Sixth Commandment. Deuteronomy 5:17 says simply, “Thou shalt not kill.” You will also find this passage in Exodus 20:13. The Sixth Commandment is the shortest of all the commandments. However, that does not mean it is easily comprehended or understood. There are many implications in the Sixth Commandment.

Obviously, in today’s unbiblical and post-Christian society, murder is acceptable. I am talking about aborticide, infanticide, and even euthanasia. If you have never looked on the Internet at the abortion clock, I encourage you to do so. Some of the sites displaying it are rather disturbing.

Abortion Statistics and Societal Insanity

Since Roe v. Wade in 1973, up until this month in the United States alone, there have been 61,292,330 abortions. Worldwide, there have been 1,527,177,165. There is an abortion every 26 seconds in this country, which means 137 babies are aborted every hour, 3,304 every day, 23,196 every week, and 100,516 every month. Even while I have spoken, a number of babies have been killed, murdered, aborted.

To show how insane, delusional, and absolutely insensitive Americans have become in their thinking, consider an article on Brianna and her baby. From New Jersey: The pregnant cow that narrowly escaped slaughter last month by kicking open a door, jumping off a two-level cattle trailer onto Route 80 in Patterson, and giving birth a few days later at a sanctuary is getting the attention of lawmakers. Brianna's Law has been introduced by Assemblyman Benji Wimberly, Democrat of Passaic. He would make transporting pregnant livestock for slaughter and killing pregnant livestock fourth-degree crimes. Wimberly says cattle cannot defend themselves or speak up for themselves on issues like this. "It's animal rights. It's the right thing to do. It's the moral thing to do."

"And you're protecting something that really can't protect itself," he said. Wimberly said Patterson's animal control officer, John DeCando, was one of the officers who helped corral Brianna on Route 80. When he found out the cow was pregnant, he felt that something needed to be done to prevent any pregnant cow from being slaughtered. Wimberly said he had to do something because DeCando is on top of things when it comes to animal rights and safety. "Once John DeCando called you, you know it's legitimate. You know it's the right thing to do," Wimberly said.

If the bill becomes law, there would be fines of $3,000 to $10,000 for each conviction and a potential for 18 months in prison. A civil penalty of $3,000 to $5,000 for each pregnant or slaughtered pregnant cow is also included in the bill. Wimberly said he had been getting tremendous support for the bill and expected it to fly through the Assembly and the Senate. A spokeswoman for People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals said her group was happy to see a bill introduced and hoped it would open people's eyes to the alleged

abuses in the dairy industry. State Senator Nellie Pou, Democrat of Passaic, was also drafting legislation to prevent similar situations. Wimberly believed the cow knew exactly what she was doing during her escape.

He even talked about it with his pastor, who said, "Brianna knew she had to save her child." That is pretty deep. Brianna went on to give birth to a calf named Winter at the Skylands Animal Sanctuary in Wantage. Obviously, and you've heard me preach this before, it is against biblical law to kill a mother and her young on the same day. God simply forbids it.

Biblical View of Animal Life vs. Human Life

I pointed out that this is respect for family. Anyone who listens to my preaching and anyone who knows me knows that I have a real, genuine love for animals. I have cows, and all my cows are pets. I have a 3,000-pound bull; I can run my hands all over him and pet him like a little dog. Other bulls and other cows—I really respect and love my animals. But as much as I love my animals, an animal's life is nothing in comparison to a baby's life. And for a Democrat, for a politician, to say, "These animals can't speak for themselves. They can't defend themselves."

What do you think about a child in the womb? What do you think about a little child? I concur that there should be concern for animals. But to have concern for animals and no concern for humans is something quite beyond me.

I want to compare Brianna's Law with something written by Mike Adams, the Health Ranger, concerning the aborticide law then in effect in New York. He wrote that, under the new law, a child might be aborted up to the due date or even during birth itself. If the child survived the attempted abortion and was born alive, the child might be murdered on sight by an abortionist to complete the abortion.

New York's Abortion Law and Infanticide

When the law was passed, New York Democrats applauded and cheered in the state Senate chambers, and Cuomo ordered a

prominent building lit in pink to signify the blood of children that Democrats were ecstatic to see spilled daily.

A second article, from the Daily Sheeple, stated that as heinous as New York's new abortion law was—allowing unborn babies to be legally murdered up to the point of birth—it was actually worse. According to the article's reading of the law, changes to section 4164 of New York's public health law not only legalized abortion at any point during pregnancy but also allowed babies to be aborted after they were born, a form of murder known as infanticide.

The article cited Life News, saying the legislation's wording suggested that botched abortions, in which an unborn baby was birthed rather than murdered, could be attempted again after the baby had left the birth canal. It quoted the law: “When an abortion is performed after the 20th week of pregnancy, a physician other than the physician performing the abortion shall be in attendance to take control of and to provide immediate medical care for any live birth that is the result of the abortion.”

In other words, should a baby be born instead of being aborted as intended, another physician can step in and engage the process a second time. This law guarantees it, sweeping away a large portion of the penal codes that protected abortion survivors. Tony Perkins said that this came from the Family Research Council. The law in New York says that if the abortionist does not complete the abortion, a second physician can step in after the baby is born and kill the baby.

When you stop and think about all of this, if we really understood the Sixth Commandment and its implications, and if we really applied it, we would have regard for all life—not only the lives of animals, but also the lives of human beings. The negative side of the Sixth Commandment is, “Thou shalt not kill”; the positive side is, “Thou shalt preserve life.” Therefore, we have a duty to preserve life—all life.

The Positive Duty to Preserve Life

Since God is the author and creator of life, life can only be taken on God's terms. I am not going to discuss some messages I have taught in times past, but in the two-part series on the biblical doctrine of

self-defense, I listed seventeen reasons based upon the Word of God why human life could be lawfully and legitimately taken on God's terms. God sets this forth very clearly in His Word.

When you stop and think about animals, most people have no conscience when it comes to killing them. I have seen tracks where people purposely ran off the road just to kill one of those gopher tortoises, running over and crushing him. The old gopher tortoise does nothing but eat grass and dig a hole in the ground, usually at an angle so that it is not on top of the ground where someone can fall into it. It is almost insane that people today have no concern for life.

When you look at how easily people murder today, it is deeply troubling. I read where a sixty-nine-year-old woman murdered her husband because he had promised to quit watching pornography, but she caught him watching it again. I also read where a man murdered another over a nickel. Some time ago, one brother murdered his brother because he believed his brother was using too much of the Internet for playing games.

Why is life meaningless and valueless today? The answer is that we certainly do not understand the Sixth Commandment, and we do not apply it.

Now when you are talking about animals, certainly there are biblical, lawful, and legitimate reasons why animal life can be taken. One of them is self-defense. I mean, I love my cows, but I've got news for you: if one of my cows turns and tries to kill me, I'm going to kill the cow if I can to stop her from killing me. Obviously, human life is more valuable and above an animal's life. You may kill in self-defense. You may also kill for food and clothing. God gave animals to us for meat and for clothing or for whatever. And of course, we can also kill lawfully and legitimately if something is hindering dominion. Now I don't eat rabbits, but if a rabbit is eating up my garden, he is hindering dominion, and I would kill the rabbit.

Now if I could give it to someone who ate rabbits, wonderful, I would do that as well. But anytime that anything is hindering dominion, it is then a nuisance and it can be taken out legally and lawfully. So there is a general rule I think that we can see. The general rule is this: if you do not have a regard for the lives of what

you and I would call the lower animals, you are not going to have any regard for the lives of the higher animals.

In other words, it starts at the bottom and it works up. It is an argument from the lesser to the greater.

Now the Bible tells you in the book of Proverbs, chapter 12 and verse 10, that a righteous man regardeth the life of his beast, but the tender mercies of the wicked are cruel. So, if you have a beast, if you have an animal, if you're righteous, you're going to regard its life. That's all there is to it. I knew a man many, many years ago because when I was a boy, you farmed and you plowed with mules. Tractors were just really coming in. He lived next to us and had such a temper you would not believe. When his mule would jump the trace and tear apart the ground, he would get so angry he would go get his rifle, kill the mule, and turn around and go buy him another one. I mean, just ridiculous. A righteous man regardeth the life of his beast, but the tender mercies of the wicked are cruel.

God's Law distinguishes in His Word between murder, manslaughter, and what you and I would call accidental killing—misadventure sometimes it is called—and what we would call justifiable homicide. You'll find all of that in Scripture as well. But the sum of the Sixth Commandment is this: we are not to do any unjust violence to anyone or anything. Scripture certainly tells us that the Sixth Commandment also includes the tongue. When I say the tongue, listen very carefully.

The Commandment Includes the Tongue and Attitudes

Proverbs chapter 18 in verse 21 says, "Death and life are in the power of the tongue, and they that love it shall eat the fruit thereof." So if you love life, then you will control your tongue and eat its fruit. If you do not control your tongue, then you love death, and you will eat its fruit regardless of what you do. God says you will eat its fruit.

All of us have heard of character assassination. All of us know about the horrors of gossip, slander, and libel. That is why there are laws against those things. I personally know pastors whose lives,

families, and ministries have been ruined because someone told a lie about them. Sometimes those lies are very far-reaching.

Look in your Bibles to Matthew chapter 5, while holding Deuteronomy 5, and you will see very clearly that our Lord includes the tongue in the Sixth Commandment. In this passage, our Lord is correcting the misinterpretation and misapplication of the law by the Pharisees. He says, beginning in verse 21, "Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment."

Our Lord then goes on to say, "But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment: and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, that is 'you stupid idiot, you worthless rascal,' shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire." The Sixth Commandment incorporates the tongue as well. It refers not only to our actions but also to our attitudes, our dispositions, and our tongues.

In Exodus chapter 20 and verse 13 it is the same command: "Thou shalt not kill." Matthew Poole says on the Sixth Commandment, "to wit any man or woman without authority and without just cause, which exception must necessarily be understood because many other scriptures command the magistrate to kill great offenders. And this prohibition being delivered by God, who made and searcheth and demands men's heart, must be extended not only to the external act of killing, that is, 'Thou shalt not kill,' but to all motions of the heart or tongue which tend that way as anger, hatred, envy, malice, strife, blows, and the challenges of duelists, which is clearly manifest by comparing this with other scriptures."

Here, as in the rest, the contrary duty is commanded: preserving the lives of our neighbors as much as lies within our power. The Sixth Commandment has a negative and a positive. The negative is, "Thou shalt not kill." The positive is, "Thou shalt preserve life."

Since we are talking about the promises in these commandments, there is an implied promise: if we obey the negative and do no unjust violence, and if we obey the positive and seek to preserve life, then

inevitably we will learn not only the value of life, but also to love life ourselves. God has promised long life to those who love life.

The Fear of the Lord and Long Life

For instance, Psalm 34, beginning with verse 11, says, "Come, ye children, hearken unto me: I will teach you the fear of the Lord. What man is he that desireth life, and loveth many days, that he may see good? Keep thy tongue from evil, and thy lips from speaking guile. Depart from evil, and do good."

“Seek peace, and pursue it. The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, and his ears are open unto their cry. The face of the Lord is against them that do evil, to cut off the remembrance of them from the earth. The righteous cry, and the Lord heareth, and delivereth them out of all their troubles.”

Before getting to verse 12, look back at verse 11: “Come, ye children, hearken unto me: I will teach you the fear of the Lord.” What is the fear of the Lord? Without re-preaching earlier messages on the fear of the Lord, let us look at Deuteronomy, chapter 6, and see what the fear of the Lord is as it is revealed in this book. We could go to Proverbs, Psalms, or about every book of the Bible, but notice Deuteronomy, chapter 6, verses 1 and 2:

“Now these are the commandments, the statutes, and the judgments, which the Lord your God commanded to teach you, that ye might do them in the land whither ye go to possess it: that thou mightest fear the Lord thy God, to keep all his statutes and his commandments, which I command thee, thou, and thy son, and thy son’s son, all the days of thy life; and that thy days may be prolonged.”

Fearing the Lord is equated with keeping His statutes and His commandments. If you do that, your days shall be prolonged. In verse 13 He says, “Thou shalt fear the Lord thy God, and serve him, and shalt swear by his name.” Fearing the Lord relates to serving Him through obedience and worship, and to swearing by His name because He alone is the sovereign and true God. We acknowledge Him, we confess Him, and He is our God. So He said, “Thou shalt fear the Lord thy God, and serve him, and shalt swear by his

Look in verse 24 of the same chapter. The Bible says, “And the Lord commanded us to do all these statutes, to fear the Lord our God, for our good always, that he might preserve us alive, as it is at this day.” Earlier He talked about our days being prolonged; now He is talking about preserving our lives. Fearing the Lord once again is obeying His Word. It is obeying His law.

Look in Deuteronomy 8:6: “Therefore thou shalt keep the commandments of the Lord thy God, to walk in his ways, and to fear him.” We are to keep the commandments of God; that is walking in His ways, and that is fearing Him. Deuteronomy 10:12 says, “And now, Israel, what doth the Lord thy God require of thee, but to fear the Lord thy God, to walk in all his ways, and to love him, and to serve the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul?” What does God require of thee but to fear the Lord? What is fearing the Lord? It is walking in all of His ways, loving Him, and serving Him with all your heart and with all your soul. Verse 13 says, “To keep the commandments of the Lord, and his statutes, which I command thee this day for thy good.”

Deuteronomy 13:4 says, “Ye shall walk after the Lord your God, and fear him, and keep his commandments, and obey his voice, and ye shall serve him, and cleave unto him.” Fearing the Lord is obeying Him and keeping His commandments. It is worshiping Him, serving Him, and cleaving unto Him. It is saying, “He is my God and He is the one whom I love and whom I will serve.” Now go back to Psalm 34, because in this passage,

He says, “Come, my children, and I’m going to teach you the fear of the Lord.” Remember, He has talked about prolonging your days and preserving your life. Then He says: “Come, ye children, hearken unto me: I will teach you the fear of the Lord. What man is he that desireth life, and loveth many days, that he may see good? Keep thy tongue from evil, and thy lips from speaking guile. Depart from evil, and do good; seek peace, and pursue it. The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, and his ears are open unto their cry. The face of the Lord is against them that do evil, to cut off the remembrance of them from the earth.”

Go back to verse 12: “What man is he that desireth life?” Everyone wants to live. I have known some people who said they wanted to

die. I know two right now. They are elderly, have problems, and are ready to die; they are waiting to die. But I have sat by the bedsides of many people who died in hospitals and at home. The interesting thing is that even those who say they want to die, when it comes time to die, their bodies fight for life. Isn't that amazing?

That is simply our nature. "What man is he that desireth life, and loveth many days, that he may see good?" He wants to live a long life, but not merely a long life. He wants to live a good, happy life.

John Calvin said of verse 12: "The prophet does not inquire if there be any man so disposed, as if all men voluntarily brought upon themselves the miseries which befall them. For we know that all men without exception desire to live in the enjoyment of happiness. But he censures severely the blindness and folly which men exhibit in the forwardness of their desires and in the vanity of their endeavors to obtain happiness."

For while all men are eagerly intent upon acquiring what is for their profit, there will be found scarcely one in a hundred who studies to purchase peace and a quiet and desirable state of life by just and equitable means. The prophet therefore admonishes his disciples that nearly the whole world are deceived and led astray by their own folly, while they promise themselves a happy life from any other source than a divine blessing which God bestows is not viable.

In other words, everybody wants to live a long life and a happy life. But what the psalmist is saying is this: if you want to live a long life, if you want to love life, you have to have a godly, obedient life, one that is in line with God and His Word. It is only a righteous life that is going to lead to happiness, satisfaction, and enjoyment.

The Bible tells you in Proverbs 19:23, "The fear of the Lord tendeth to life: and he that hath it shall abide satisfied; he shall not be visited with evil." The fear of the Lord tends to life, and he that hath it shall abide satisfied. He shall not be visited with evil.

I have never known one genuine, sincere Christian who wished he was anything other than a real, genuine, sincere Christian. The fear of the Lord tends to life. The Bible says in Proverbs 21:21, "He that followeth after righteousness and mercy findeth life, righteousness,

and honour." Proverbs 22:4 says, "By humility and the fear of the Lord are riches, and honour, and life."

New Testament Confirmation and Practical Applications

That which is promised in the Old Testament is also promised in the New Testament. First Peter 3:10-12 says, "For he that will love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile: let him eschew evil, and do good; let him seek peace, and ensue it. For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers: but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil."

"For he that will love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile." And then verse 11: "Let him eschew evil." You know, in the book of Job, chapter 1, the Bible said that Job feared God and eschewed evil. You know what the word "eschew" means? It means to spit out. You cannot stomach it; you cannot swallow it.

I thought this morning about something that happened to me when I was a child. My parents had gone to the neighbors to visit with them, and my sister and I were playing in the kitchen with their children. I do not remember how old I was—eight, nine, ten, something like that. It was the year that saccharin first came out. My father and mother and their friends were in the living room drinking coffee, and my dad called me and said, "Son, come get me another cup of coffee."

I went and got his coffee cup and filled it with coffee. Mrs. Young hollered, "The saccharin is on the table." I had never heard of saccharin or seen it before. All I knew was that my dad always took two teaspoons of sugar in his coffee. So I put two teaspoons of those little round pills in the coffee and stirred them up. When my father took that cup of coffee and turned it up, the first thing he did was spit it out on the carpet. Then he looked at me and said, "Son, if I did not think this stuff would kill you, I would make you drink every drop."

That is what “eschew” means: you spit it out. You cannot swallow it. You cannot stomach it. He could not even hold it in his mouth, not because of the heat, but because of the extreme sweetness. So the Bible says very clearly that if we want to live a long life, a good life, and a happy life, we have to eschew evil, do good, seek peace, and ensue it.

Adam Clarke, in his commentary, said that this passage reveals five truths and five things we must do. First, we must refrain from evil speaking, lying, and slandering. Second, we must avoid flattery and fair speeches that cover hypocritical and wicked intentions. Third, we must avoid evil and keep going away from it. Fourth, we must do good and walk in the way of righteousness. Fifth, we must live peaceably with all men: seek peace where it has been lost, restore it where it has been broken, and pursue it when it seems to be flying away. He who lives thus must live happy in himself.

As excess in action and passion always tends to shorten life, and nothing preys on the constitution more than disorderly passions, he must live not only happiest but longest who avoids all these things. Each of these things relates to the Sixth Commandment: “Thou shalt preserve life.” If we understand the Sixth Commandment, we will do everything we possibly can to preserve our lives. That means taking care of our health. We are not to do anything to our bodies that will shorten our lives.

Every day we read about people who kill themselves with drugs and overdoses, and about people doing absolutely stupid things. I have often said, “I don't want anything in my body that's not supposed to be in my body.” I don't even like pharmaceuticals. The truth is that some people will not take care of themselves. They will not eat right, live right, or do right, and they let their health go to pot. Anything we do that adds to our self-destruction is a violation of the Sixth Commandment. Suicide would obviously violate the Sixth Commandment as well, but not taking care of our own health is truly a violation.

The Bible says in Proverbs 11:19, “As righteousness tendeth to life: so he that pursueth evil pursueth it to his own death.” As righteousness tends to life, pursuing righteousness means pursuing

length of life, a good life, and a long life. If you pursue evil, you pursue it to your own death.

Another implication of the Sixth Commandment is preserving the lives of the stranger, the disadvantaged, and the unprotected. We are not talking only about babies, but also about widows, orphans, and strangers. Just because someone is easily taken advantage of does not mean that you should take advantage of them.

God says in Exodus 22:21–24, “Thou shalt neither vex a stranger, nor oppress him: for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt. Ye shall not afflict any widow, or fatherless child. If thou afflict them in any wise, and they cry at all unto me, I will surely hear their cry; and my wrath shall wax hot, and I will kill you with the sword; and your wives shall be widows, and your children fatherless.”

That seems to me like a very solemn promise. God says, “Thou shalt not in any wise afflict them,” the widow, the orphan, or the stranger. You are not to take advantage of them simply because they are easily taken advantage of. You are to do everything you can to preserve their lives as well.

Deuteronomy 24:17–18 says, “Thou shalt not pervert the judgment of the stranger, nor of the fatherless; nor take a widow's raiment to pledge: but thou shalt remember that thou wast a bondman in Egypt, and the Lord thy God redeemed thee thence: therefore I command thee to do this thing.” Again, “Thou shalt not pervert the judgment of the stranger, nor of the fatherless; nor take a widow's raiment to pledge.”

Have you ever stopped to think that our entire judicial system today is set up to take advantage of the poor, the widows, and the strangers? If I am wrongly accused and I am a poor man, I cannot afford an attorney. I may not even be able to afford court costs. You say, “Well, all you've got to do is ask for a public defender.” Yes, and I understand public defenders. They get paid, and they don't represent you, usually. There are exceptions; I understand that. But I have known people who were wrongly accused of things, given a horrendous fine, and forced to pay it because it would cost even more just to fight it. It was an economic determination, not necessarily one of guilt. God is saying, look, you just can't do this.

You have to learn to preserve life in those who are unprotected, poor, disadvantaged, and without the means to help themselves. God says part of the Sixth Commandment is preserving their life and protecting them as well. If this is true—and it is true—consider it in light of the abortion going on in this land today. There is no one more unprotected than the child in his mother's womb, and hardly anyone to speak up for them.

Luke chapter 10 gives us a great application of the Sixth Commandment, made by our Lord Himself. Our Lord had been speaking to a certain lawyer who asked what he had to do to inherit eternal life. God told him to love the Lord with all his heart and his neighbor as himself. But the lawyer, willing to justify himself, said unto Jesus, "And who is my neighbour?"

The Good Samaritan as an Example

Jesus answered, "A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, which stripped him of his raiment, and wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead. And by chance there came down a certain priest that way: and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. And likewise a Levite, who was supposed to be a teacher of the law, when he was at the place, came and looked on him, and passed by on the other side. But a certain Samaritan, whom the Israelites despised—they called them dogs, because they were mongrels, they had intermarried with the heathen—as he journeyed, came where he was: and when he saw him, he had compassion on him, and went to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him. And on the morrow when he departed, he took out two pence, and gave them to the host, and said unto him, Take care of him;"

"And whatsoever thou spendest more, when I come again, I will repay thee." Which now of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbour unto him that fell among the thieves? And he said, "He that shewed mercy on him." Then said Jesus unto him, "Go, and do thou likewise."

Did the good Samaritan obey the Sixth Commandment? The answer is yes. Did the good Samaritan love life? The answer is yes.

Did the good Samaritan seek to preserve life? The answer is yes. Did he love the life of a stranger? The answer is yes. The priest and the Levite passed by one of their own, but the Samaritan showed mercy to a stranger.

So the implied promise in the Sixth Commandment is this: if we obey the negative and if we obey the positive, we're not only going to learn to value life, we're going to learn to love life.

Conclusion: Loving Life and Loving Christ

If we truly love life, even our lives, we will be constantly and continually praising our God for life, for health, and for happiness. There are two verses of scripture that I quote every day. When I awaken every morning, before I ever get out of bed, I thank the Lord for allowing Alice and I to live through the night, and I quote Lamentations 3:22-23: “It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not. They are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness.”

Every night when I go to bed, before I go to sleep, I thank the Lord for allowing us to live through that day. I quote that passage again, and I ask for those same mercies to be extended to us through that night, so that we can awaken the next morning by His grace, compassion, and faithfulness.

When I look at our local paper and read the obituary columns, seeing people who have died in their 20s, 30s, 50s, 60s, and even 70s, I have to stop and say, “Father, thank you for allowing me to live as long as I have lived and enjoy the life that you have given me.” When I pass those crosses on the road where people have been killed, I thank the Lord for life and health. If we really understand the Sixth Commandment, we're going to appreciate and love life.

Some say, “I don't have too much to praise the Lord for.” If you turn to Psalm 103, you will find much to praise the Lord for. David says, “Bless the Lord, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless his holy name. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits.” Think about all those gracious things God has done for you: “Who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases; who redeemeth thy life from destruction; who crowneth thee with

lovingkindness and tender mercies; who satisfieth thy mouth with good things; so that thy youth is renewed like the eagle's." Can you imagine?

Have you ever sat down to a wonderful meal, with everything absolutely exquisite and delicious? Can you not be thankful that you not only had a good meal, but were able to enjoy it? Each night, when I sink down in that tub of hot water, I thank the Lord for a hot bath. I think of those people in India, China, and Africa who do not even have enough water to drink, much less to bathe in. Or, if they bathe in it, it is filthy; they come out worse than when they went in. If you truly love life, then obviously you are going to be thankful for everything that God has done.

The second application is this: If we love life, we will regard all life, even the lives of animals. We will protect and promote life in every area and learn to take life only on God's terms.

Proverbs chapter 8, verses 35 and 36, says, "Whoso findeth me findeth life, and shall obtain favour of the Lord." Whoever finds Jesus Christ finds life, and obtains favor of the Father. But the next verse says, "But he that sinneth against me wrongeth his own soul: all they that hate me love death." If you understand the Sixth Commandment, you will learn to love life. If you do not understand the Sixth Commandment, you will learn to love death. "All they that hate me love death." I prefer to love life, and to love the Lord Jesus and walk as He has commanded. Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we bow to Thee this day.

We thank You for Your Word, Your truth, life, health, and every blessing. Help us to say with David, "Bless the Lord, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless His holy name. Bless the Lord, and forget not all His benefits." Give us grace that we may serve Thee acceptably, with reverence and godly fear. In the name of Jesus Christ we ask and pray. Amen.

CHAPTER 16

Promises Of The Law

Part 16

The Seventh Commandment and God-Centered Marriage

Introduction: Marriage Must Be God-Centered

In Deuteronomy 5:18, the Word of God says, “Neither shalt thou commit adultery.” You will find it in Exodus 20:14: “Thou shalt not commit adultery.” Marriage, like everything else, is to be God-centered. Our lives, our homes, our personal lives, and even the most intimate acts between husband and wife are to be centered in God and His law.

We relate to each other and fulfill our duties to each other as unto the Lord. You remember 1 Corinthians 10:31: “Whether therefore ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.” We could argue from the lesser to the greater. If eating and drinking should be done in reference to God and His glory, should not our homes, our interaction, and even our most intimate acts be for His honor and glory as well?

The Problem of Modern Romanticism and Feelings-Based Relationships

One of the main problems today is not only humanism, but what we would call modern-day romanticism. Many have made sex and marriage nothing more than feelings. I have heard people say, husbands to wives and wives to husbands, and boyfriends to girlfriends and vice versa, “I have feelings for you.” But what happens when you no longer have feelings? The marriage is gone; the relationship is gone, because people are continuing to live by feelings rather than by biblical principle and biblical law. A failure to live in terms of God’s law with our spouses is, in actuality, a denial of God and His authority.

Defining Adultery and Self-Justification

The seventh commandment is very simple and straightforward, as are all the commandments: “Thou shalt not commit adultery.” Unhappily, we try to define adultery for ourselves. You have to remember that to define is to limit. That is why there cannot be a definition of God, because to define God is to limit God. Many people like to define things in their own terms, and the reason is very simple.

It is much like the lawyer in Luke chapter 10, when our Lord had given the story of the Good Samaritan and the lawyer asked, “Who then is my neighbor?” The Bible said, “He, willing to justify himself, asked who his neighbor was.” So many times we want to excuse our actions and thoughts. We want to justify ourselves. If the truth be known, we really want to leave ourselves some wiggle room so we can do what we want to, please our own flesh, and satisfy our flesh, even though we know in reality it is wicked and wrong.

The Scope of the Seventh Commandment

Matthew Poole, on the seventh commandment, said, “Here is mentioned one kind of uncleanness as being eminently sinful and unjust and pernicious to human society. But under this are comprehended and forbidden all other kinds of filthiness, as bestiality, sodomy, whoredom, fornication, and all means, occasions, and appearances of them.”

Adam Clarke went farther: “One principal part of the criminality of adultery consists in its injustice. Number one, it robs a man of his right by taking from him the affections of his wife. Number two, it does him a wrong by fathering on him and obliging him to maintain as his own a spurious offspring, a child which is not his. The act itself and everything leading to the act is prohibited by this commandment. For our Lord says, even he who looks upon a woman to lust after her has already committed adultery with her in his heart. And not only adultery, the unlawful commerce between two married persons is forbidden here, but also fornication of all kinds, of mental and sensual uncleanness. All impure books, songs, paintings, which tend to inflame and debauch the mind are against this law.”

When you think of adultery, you very seldom think of pornography, but they are very closely connected. Our English word “pornography” comes from two Greek words: porne, which is fornication, and grapho, which is writing. The word pornography simply means fornication writing. Interestingly enough, fornication, or pornography, is a gateway into what we would call uncleanness, fornication, adultery, and so forth. I have known pastors who became hooked on pornography and ended up losing not only their wives, but their families and ministries as well.

Our Lord made it very clear that adultery or fornication actually begins in the heart. In Matthew 5:27–28, He said, “Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery. But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.”

The Connection Between Looking and Lusting

There is a connection between looking and lusting. May I remind you that the heart is the mind, because our Lord Himself said, “For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts.” The heart and the mind, basically speaking, are synonymous; they are one and the same. We need to understand the connection between looking and lusting. You remember what happened to David in 2 Samuel chapter 11.

This was the beginning of his adulterous relationship with Bathsheba and the murder of Uriah her husband. Listen to verse 2: “And it came to pass in an eveningtide, that David arose from off his

bed, and walked upon the roof of the king's house: and from the roof he saw a woman washing herself; and the woman was very beautiful to look upon." Notice that he saw Bathsheba washing herself. The woman was very beautiful to look upon. Here is where David's sin actually began. David not only looked; he continued to look because she was very beautiful.

It may not be possible to avoid the first glance or the first look, but it is entirely possible to avoid continually looking and observing. It is quite possible to turn your eyes away from a source, to turn your head, and to refuse to think about the situation. It is certainly possible to recall the Word of God and the commandments of God. Although there is a connection between looking and lusting, we must also remember that the Word of God is to be our standard and our guide.

The Penalty for Adultery and David's Pardon

The seventh commandment is repeated in various forms in the Bible. For instance, in Leviticus chapter 18 and verse 20, the Bible says it like this: "Moreover thou shalt not lie carnally with thy neighbour's wife, to defile thyself with her." So adultery here is mentioned as defilement. The Hebrew word actually means to become unclean, to pollute oneself, to defile oneself, and to become profane.

I want you to understand that the penalty for adultery in the Bible is death. Leviticus chapter 20 and verse 10 says, "And the man that committeth adultery with another man's wife, even he that committeth adultery with his neighbour's wife, the adulterer and the adulteress shall surely be put to death." Deuteronomy chapter 22 and verse 22 says it again: "If a man be found lying with a woman married to an husband, then they shall both of them die, both the man that lay with the woman, and the woman: so shalt thou put away evil from Israel."

So many people try to object and say, "Well, now, wait a minute. David certainly committed adultery with Bathsheba, and he did not die." Well, certainly eventually he did die, but the only reason he was not executed, the only reason he was not stoned to death, is given to us in 2 Samuel chapter 12 and verses 13 and 14. Once Nathan had confronted David, David said it like this: "I have sinned against the

Lord." And Nathan said unto David, "The Lord also hath put away thy sin; thou shalt not die. Howbeit, because by this deed thou hast given great occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme, the child also that is born unto thee shall surely die."

Notice that the only reason David was not put to death—and, by the way, he had the death penalty laid upon him from two acts—was that the Lord put away his sin.

Number one, adultery with Bathsheba, and number two, the murder of Uriah the Hittite, because God charged him with murder by the sword of the children of Ammon. The only reason he was not executed was simply because God sovereignly pardoned David. Had God not sovereignly pardoned him, then he would have been executed.

Just because God sovereignly pardoned David does not mean that David escaped the consequences of his sin. You have to remember that not only did the child die, but later in the Bible Amnon raped his own sister Tamar. Then Adonijah revolted against David, or at least tried to do so. Absalom, whose sister Tamar was, turned around and murdered Amnon for what he did to Tamar. Later, Absalom tried to slay his own father, ran him off the throne, and tried to steal the kingdom from him.

There are a lot of people who are willing to identify with David's sin, but they are not willing to identify with the consequences of David's sin. Moreover, there are people who want to identify with David's sin, but they do not want to identify with the remorse, the grief, and the repentance that David exhibited.

May I remind you that there are five penitential Psalms in the Bible where David is confessing that sin and saying, "I'm sorry, I'm wrong, I transgressed, I'm an iniquitous individual; please have mercy upon me." Obviously, there are a lot of people who say, "Well, David did it." Yes, he did. But David suffered the consequences of his sin as well.

We have not really understood the importance or the implications of this seventh commandment. We have not really perceived its vileness and its wickedness. Adultery is a really grievous sin, especially for a Christian to commit. It is more than simply a sin of

the flesh. It is more than simply desiring to have someone who does not belong to you. First Thessalonians chapter 4, verse 6, also tells us that adultery is considered theft, because you are defrauding someone of that which belongs to them and taking it to yourself.

Adultery as Blasphemy and Theft

One of the greatest implications of the sin of adultery is that it destroys the oneness created by virtue of the marriage union between husband and wife. The Bible says that man shall leave his father and mother, cleave unto his wife, and they shall be one flesh. The Bible also says, "What God has joined together, let not man put asunder."

The point is very simple: adultery is an affront to God. It is a slap in God's face and a dare of God's justice. Let me point out the word adultery. We use that word not only in relationship to a man and a wife, but also in other areas. This helps us understand the implication of “Thou shalt not commit adultery.”

Suppose I am at Gary's house, and Gary asks whether I would like a glass of wine. Although I do not drink per se, I say yes. Gary begins pouring, but realizes he does not have much wine, so he pours half a glass. Then he opens a bottle of water and fills the rest of the glass with water. What has he done to the wine? He has adulterated it; he has diluted it and watered it down.

In Isaiah 1:22, God condemned Israel, saying, “You've added dross to your silver and water to your wine.” In other words, whenever you water something down and dilute it, you adulterate that product. Obviously, in adultery, the oneness and uniqueness between the man and his wife, and the woman and her husband, are diluted. It is not only diluted and watered down, but basically even dissolved.

Hence, it is a very blasphemous sin. It leads not only to the destruction of men and women and the destruction of the home, but also to the destruction of society. Let me show you the emphasis God places upon it, so we can understand its importance. Turn in your Bibles to 1 Corinthians chapter 6 in the New Testament.

I am using the terms adultery and fornication basically interchangeably, because fornication is a very broad word that includes adultery. Notice 1 Corinthians 6:15: “Know ye not that your bodies are the members of Christ?” It is common knowledge among Christians that Jesus Christ is our Head and we are His body. This is clearly taught in Ephesians, Colossians, and other Scriptures.

“Shall I then take the members of Christ, and make them the members of an harlot? God forbid. What? know ye not that he which is joined to an harlot is one body? for two, saith he, shall be one flesh.” This is a marriage. I do not really want to use the word ceremony, because a ceremony is not the marriage. When Rebecca came to Isaac, Genesis 24 says that Isaac took Rebecca into his tent, and she became his wife. Marriage is more of a covenantal relationship, a relationship of coverture; and it is between not only the man and the wife, but the families as well. Thus, when a man leaves his wife and goes to a harlot, he enters a marriage relationship.

“But he that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit. Flee fornication. Every sin that a man doeth is without the body; but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body. What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?” “For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.” Adultery, especially among Christians, is therefore a blasphemous act: it joins the members of Christ to a harlot, while the believer’s body belongs to God and is the temple of the Holy Ghost.

I am simply trying to point out how grievous and blasphemous the sin of adultery is, especially for Christians, because it is nothing less than a uniting of Jesus Christ to that which is forbidden. In other words, here is God's law saying, "Thou shalt not," and here you are taking God and saying, "Yes, I shall." It is a very blasphemous and wicked act.

You cannot excuse yourself by saying, "Well, I did not go into a harlot. I did not go into a prostitute." The Greek word porneia refers not only to a woman who sells her body for gain, but also to a woman who gives her body for pleasure. It is a very broad word and covers a

lot of ground. Note also that fornication of any kind is a sin against your own body. Adultery and fornication are not merely sins against your own body; they are sins against your mate, your spouse, your family, society, your church, and God.

The Positive Command: Possess Your Vessel in Sanctification

We have been redeemed by Him and purchased back out of the slave market. We belong to Him—our bodies, everything that we are. Therefore, if we go into an act like this, we are joining Jesus Christ to that act, because He is our head and we are His body. It is extremely blasphemous.

In the Old Testament, Israel was in a covenantal relationship with God. They sinned against God many times and in many different ways. I want to show you from the Bible what God says about their sin and rebellion. Turn back in your Bibles to Isaiah 43, and look at verse 24.

God is condemning them for failing to truly worship Him and to give Him that which He demands. He says in verse 23, "Thou hast not brought me the small cattle of thy burnt offerings; neither hast thou honoured me with thy sacrifices. I have not caused thee to serve with an offering, nor wearied thee with incense." Then, in verse 24: "Thou hast bought me no sweet cane with money, neither hast thou filled me with the fat of thy sacrifices: but thou hast made me to serve with thy sins, thou hast wearied me with thine iniquities."

"Thou hast made me to serve with thy sins, thou hast wearied me with thine iniquities." For the Christian, when you stop and think about it, it is really not just adultery or fornication, but all types of sin that we commit are truly acts of blasphemy, in the sense that we are joining Jesus Christ to that sin.

If I go over to James, stick my hand in his pocket, and steal a hundred-dollar bill, it is not just that I have sinned against James, his family, the church, and everything else. I have actually sinned against God, because God has said, "Thou shalt not steal," and yet I have joined Him to that act, since I am a Christian. That is blasphemy.

Paul is pressing this in 1 Corinthians chapter 6 so that we might understand it. He tells us to flee fornication. Get out of there. Run from it. When Potiphar's wife tried to seduce Joseph, he left his robe and ran out. Before he did, he said, "How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" He fled and got out of there.

But if all you do is flee, you are not going to be fleeing long. There has to be something else. I do not want to deal with the negative alone—"Thou shalt not commit adultery"—but want to begin emphasizing the positive. So look in your Bibles to 1 Timothy chapter 6.

Beginning with verse 11 of 1 Timothy 6, the Apostle Paul admonishes young Timothy, who happened to be in his forties: "But thou, O man of God, flee these things; and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness." There are certain things you need to flee from. Note that he tells you not only to flee, but to follow. If all you do is flee, you are not going to be fleeing long; you will turn around and head back to temptation. God says, yes, you must get out of there; you must flee. But once you flee, make sure that you follow after righteousness and holiness, and after anything and everything that is biblical and godly. If we flee the lust of the flesh, we must flee and follow after righteousness as well.

Now consider the positive aspect of the Seventh Commandment in 1 Thessalonians 4, beginning with verse 3: "For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication." We know directly from Scripture what God's will is for us: He wills that we abstain from fornication, including every act of uncleanness, defilement, pollution, and sexual sin. "For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication: That every one of you should know how to possess his vessel," that is, his body, "in sanctification and honour; Not in the lust of concupiscence, even as the Gentiles," or heathen, "which know not God."

"That no man go beyond and defraud his brother in any matter," or, the matter there is, it is theft, "because that the Lord is the avenger of all such, as we also have forewarned you and testified." He says, "For God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto

holiness. He therefore that despiseth, despiseth not man, but God, who hath also given unto us his holy Spirit."

So you have the negative, "thou shalt not commit adultery," and now you have the positive. The positive is that you should pursue sanctification, holiness, righteousness, and obedience, that you know how to possess your body in sanctification and honor. Again, the negative is in verse 5: not like the ungodly, not like those that are lost. Then in verse 6, he says again that you want to make sure you do not defraud your brother in any way whatsoever. He reminds you that God is the avenger of all such. Then, in verse 7, he emphasizes the positive again: "For God did not call us to uncleanness, but unto holiness."

Now here is what he is saying. Look in verse 8: "He therefore that despiseth, despiseth not man, but God, who hath also given unto us his holy Spirit." So God says, if you do not like what He is teaching in 1 Thessalonians chapter 4, I am not referring to myself, but to what God says: you are not despising man; you are despising God. This is not man's law; this is God's law. God is telling us that it is His will that we learn to possess our bodies in sanctification and in honor.

If we obey the seventh commandment negatively and positively, we will not violate God's law or sin against God. On the other hand, we will learn to be sanctified, obedient, holy, and to do that which is right. It is only the grace of God that teaches us that which is right and holy. Turn over a few pages to Titus. First and Second Thessalonians, First and Second Timothy, and then Titus. Look in Titus chapter 2.

The Grace of God Teaches Holiness and Warns of Judgment

Titus 2:11 says, "For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, Teaching us, that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works."

What does the grace of God teach us? It teaches us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world. The grace of God not only teaches us that we are to possess our vessels in sanctification and honour; it is also the grace of God that warns us about God's judgment and God's chastisement.

Let us recall the passage in 1 Corinthians chapter 6: "For God is the avenger of all such."

Remember now that he said God is the avenger of all such. Hebrews 13:4 says, "Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled." There is nothing wrong with marriage. Marriage is honorable in all, and the bed undefiled. But the verse continues, "whoremongers and adulterers God will judge."

Here is something positive, holy, and right: marriage. Marriage is honorable in all, and the bed undefiled. Yet whoremongers and adulterers God will judge. This is important in light of the commandment. I have probably pointed this out before, but it may be mentioned again when we come to the tenth commandment. The Tenth Commandment deals with, "thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife," or "his ass, or his ox, or any thing that is thy neighbour's."

In Colossians 3, verses 5 and 6, Paul says, “Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth.” The word “mortify” literally means to make dead, to act like you are dead. In other words, temptation has no effect upon a dead man. That is why Romans 6 says, “Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.” This is the Greek word from which we get our English word “mortician,” and it is also the word from which “mortgage” is derived.

But Paul says, “Mortify therefore your members which are upon this earth.” What are we to mortify? What are we to make dead? He answers: “Fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry: For which things' sake the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience.”

Now, in 1 Corinthians 6, he says that God is the avenger of all such that do things like this. Hebrews 13:4 says that God will judge the whoremonger and the adulterer.

In Colossians 3, you find that the wrath of God comes upon people who engage in fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry.

Let me mention something that may surprise you. If you study adultery and the word fornication in the Bible, you will come up with an astounding truth. Although fornication and adultery do usually refer to what we are talking about in the seventh commandment, most of the time they refer to spiritual adultery and spiritual fornication. That is, they refer to having the affections stolen away from God and given either to idols, to the flesh, or to the world.

Spiritual Adultery and the Spirit of Whoredoms

For instance, look in your Bibles to Revelation chapter 2. Jezebel in the Old Testament is known as the great seductress, the great adulteress. God is speaking to the church in Thyatira. He says in verse 20, "Notwithstanding I have a few things against thee, because thou sufferest that woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols."

Usually, every time I think about Jezebel, there is an incident that comes to my mind which caused me to laugh many years ago. I was teaching fourth-grade history. One of my test questions was, "Who financed Columbus on his voyage to discover the new world?" Of course, it was King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella of Spain. One of my students put, "King Ferdinand and Queen Jezebel." I have never forgotten it. I gave him credit because he got most of it right anyhow. No, it was Queen Isabella, but here is Jezebel.

Notice what she does. She calls herself a prophetess, and she teaches and seduces God's servants to commit fornication and to eat things sacrificed unto idols. May I remind you of what happened in Numbers, when the children of Israel were seduced by the Moabites? They ate the sacrifices of the gods of Moab and committed

fornication, and God killed twenty-three thousand of them in one day.

Usually these things go together: a deviation from God and His Word, and the acts of fornication. You look around today and see what is going on, not just with people but in our churches as well. You see denominations and conventions falling by the wayside.

there was a huge article on the pedophilia involved in the Southern Baptist Convention. And of course, the same thing has been true in the Independent Baptists as well. It's absolutely insane. And you look around today and you say, "What in the world is going on?" Because there's so much that is just unbelievable. I just read this past week where a cop, a police officer, was arrested for raping dogs.

He even raped his own canine dog. And then there were the three men up north who were also arrested for having sex with donkeys and cows and goats. And it is mind-boggling. It is mind-boggling. And you say, "What in the world is happening?" I mean, there are wife swapping clubs. There's husband swapping clubs. There are things going on that, you know, it's just—you think these things weren't around 50 years ago. Maybe they were, but at least they were undercover. I mean, you know, they were not out in the open. Folks weren't bragging about them. In fact, I just saw an article where now there are men and women wearing t-shirts advertising the fact that they have an open marriage and they're willing to swap their wives and swap their husbands. Why? Let me show you.

What we have failed to discern and understand is that there is a spirit of whoredoms. And that spirit of whoredoms is not only spiritual, it is also physical. I want you to turn back in your Bibles to the book of Hosea. Daniel, Hosea, Joel and Amos. Right after the book of Daniel you have the book of Hosea. I want you to look in Hosea chapter 4 and verse 12. Hosea chapter 4 and verse 12. Look what the Bible says. Hosea 4 and verse 12. God says, "My people ask counsel at their stocks," that is at their idols, "and their staff declareth unto them: for the spirit of whoredoms hath caused them to err, and they have gone a whoring from under their God." So there's a spirit of whoredoms that leads us to compromise the Word of God and the truth of God and the things of God. You look how our

denominations have fallen and have gone down. Well look in your Bibles through the book of Hosea chapter 5 and verse 4. Hosea 5 and verse 4. Here it is again.

God says, "They will not frame their doings to turn unto their God: for the spirit of whoredoms is in the midst of them, and they have not known the Lord." "They will not frame their doings to turn unto their God, for the spirit of whoredoms is in them, and they have not known the Lord." And the word for whoredoms here refers to adultery, fornication, and prostitution. So there is a spirit of whoredoms.

This leads us to 2 Corinthians 7:1: “Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.” It is not merely the filthiness of the flesh that we must avoid; we must also avoid the filthiness of the spirit. If we are going to know how to possess our vessels in sanctification and honor and walk pleasing to the Lord, we must understand this truth.

The Promise of Faithfulness and Being Counted Faithful in Christ

Here we have a negative and a positive. The negative is, “Thou shalt not commit adultery.” The positive is, “Thou shalt possess your vessel in sanctification and honor.”

Since we are dealing with the promises of the law, are there promises involved in the seventh commandment? I would answer yes. One promise is obvious: if we obey the negative, we will embrace and follow the positive. We will know how to have our vessels in sanctification and honor. But I believe there is more—a principle that we need to hear promulgated from our Lord Himself: “He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much: and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much. If therefore ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches? And if ye have not been faithful in that which is another man's, who shall give you that which is your own?”

In its context, our Lord is using the illustration of money, but the implication is that this principle relates to everything. If we cannot

be faithful in that which is least, how can we expect to be faithful in that which is greater or the greatest? I have heard men say, “When they come after my guns, I will die with my gun in my hand.” I understand that. But if you will not stand up and be counted while you do not need a gun, what makes you think that you are going to stand when you do need a gun? If you are not going to be faithful in your money, what makes you think you are going to be faithful in something greater? This is what our Lord is saying.

I am not saying that the relationship between a husband and wife is insignificant or unimportant. It is very significant and important because God has declared it so. But that relationship pales in significance beside our relationship with God our Father through the Lord Jesus Christ. Here is the argument from the lesser to the greater: If we cannot be faithful in that which is least, what makes us think we are going to be faithful in that which is greater? If God enables us by His grace to be faithful in that which is least, we should grow in faithfulness in every area and every sphere of our lives.

We must remember that we were initially created in God's image. We sinned, rebelled, and fell, but Jesus Christ came and, according to the book of Colossians, restored us into the image of God. One of God's attributes is faithfulness. When we study the attributes of God, we find incommunicable attributes and communicable attributes. The incommunicable attributes include infinity, eminence, omniscience, omnipotence, and omnipresence; these cannot be communicated. But love, faithfulness, grace, and mercy can be communicated. Once we realize that God is the faithful God, it should inspire us to be more like Him, because we have been recreated in His image.

Deuteronomy 7:9 says, “Know therefore that the Lord thy God, he is God, the faithful God, which keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love him and keep his commandments to a thousand generations.” He is called the faithful God.

Psalm 36:5 says, “Thy mercy, O Lord, is in the heavens; and thy faithfulness reacheth unto the clouds.” Psalm 89:1 says, “I will sing of the mercies of the Lord for ever: with my mouth will I make known thy faithfulness to all generations.” Isaiah 11:5 says of our Lord the Messiah, “And righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins,

and faithfulness the girdle of his reins." First Corinthians 1:9 says, "God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord." God is faithful, by whom you were called into fellowship with His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

Certainly, I am going to quote two of my favorite verses, Lamentations 3:22–23: "It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not. They are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness." Do you realize? I know the sun will come up in the morning because God is faithful. I know the moon will arise at night because God is faithful. I know there will never be another universal flood as such because God is faithful. He has promised. He is the faithful God.

When you talk about faithfulness in marriage, listen carefully. Faithfulness in marriage means more than sexual fidelity. It is the faithful discharge of duties by the husband and the wife. It means dependability, trustworthiness, loyalty, support in adversities, and that which we call character.

The Bible says in Proverbs 31:10, "Who can find a virtuous woman? for her price is far above rubies." So if you find one, she is worth a lot. "The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her, so that he shall have no need of spoil. She will do him good and not evil all the days of her life." Note, "the heart of her husband doth safely trust in her." There is no concern, worrying, or doubting. "So that he shall have no need of spoil." She does that which is right and holy.

There is a lot that could be covered in this passage, but notice what the Bible says about her: "Strength and honour are her clothing; and she shall rejoice in time to come. She openeth her mouth with wisdom; and in her tongue is the law of kindness. She looketh well to the ways of her household, and eateth not the bread of idleness."

"Her children arise up, and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praiseth her. Many daughters have done virtuously, but thou excellest them all. Favour is deceitful, and beauty is vain: but a woman that feareth the Lord, she shall be praised. Give her of the fruit of her hands; and let her own works praise her in the gates."

Just as the woman is faithful to her husband, who safely trusts in her, the husband faithfully loves his wife, even as Christ loved the church and gave himself for it. He supports her, protects her, loves her, desires what is best for her, and leads her in the truths of the Word of God.

Let me say this again about faithfulness: faithfulness is stability, strength, and character. As we learn to be faithful in smaller and lesser things, we learn to be faithful in bigger and greater things. Thus, faithfulness to each other in marriage teaches us to be faithful in other things and areas as well. Faithfulness is a communicable attribute, and that is where we grow.

And may I put it to you very plainly? Revelation 2:10 says, "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life." How long should we be faithful? Unto death, and God will give us a crown of life. Now let me make an application. Listen carefully. Our Lord asked a very pertinent question in Matthew 24:45: "Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his lord hath made ruler over his household, to give them meat in due season?" Who is a faithful and wise servant? So the question we have to ask is, Are we faithful as our Lord's servants? Have we been faithful? Would our God count us faithful? The Bible says in 1 Corinthians 4:2, "Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful."

The word steward is a very important word. It is made up of two Greek words, oikos and nomos. Oikos is the Greek word for house, and nomos is the Greek word for law. So the word oikonomos literally means the law of the house. The steward is the one who rules the house. He is the superintendent. He is the minister. He is the steward. He is the one who has control over the house. This word oikonomos is also the source of our word economy. That is what our word economy means: the law of the house.

In 1 Corinthians 4:2, the word refers to the apostles, Christian pastors, and teachers, but it refers to everyone because God has given every one of us a stewardship. Whatever we have, whatever abilities we have, and whatever material things we have, God gave them to us. So we are stewards over everything that God has given us.

If stewards must be found faithful, as God says, then the truth of the matter is that we have to acknowledge that many times we have been unfaithful. We have been unfaithful to our spouses, our friends, our family, our church, and our God.

But I want to show you something. Turn in your Bibles to 1 Timothy, chapter 1, beginning with verse 12. I want you to see what the Apostle Paul said: "And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry."

"Who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious: but I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief. And the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus." The word "counted" in verse 12, "He counted me faithful," is exactly the same word Paul used in Philippians 3:7: "But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung." Paul was talking about his pedigree, his religiosity, and everything in his head. He counted them worthless, counted them dung.

Now look in verse 12 again: "I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry." Really? Look in verse 13. He was a blasphemer, a persecutor, injurious, ignorant, and an unbeliever. How could such a one be counted faithful? Even after Paul's conversion, was he absolutely, totally faithful? No. He was a sinner. He failed, he sinned, and he was not perfect. How, then, did God count him faithful? Look in verse 14: "And the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus." God counted Paul faithful because of the grace and mercy given to him in Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is the faithful servant and the faithful witness. God placed Paul in Jesus Christ, and he was counted faithful.

I have to confess readily and willingly that I have failed miserably many times. I have stumbled and sinned, and done things I should never have done as a lost man, and probably even as a saved man. But the truth is that God, in His great mercy, counts me faithful. Do you realize He does that for every child of God? We are unfaithful.

We do not deserve it. And yet in Jesus Christ, He counts us faithful. That should motivate and encourage us to be faithful in all our lives, because He counts us faithful by His grace.

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we bow to Thee. We thank You for Your Word and truth. We thank You for being the faithful God. And we ask that You would make us faithful to each other, to our stewardship, to our friends, to our family, to our church, and above all, Father, to Thee. Give us grace that we may serve Thee acceptably with reverence and godly fear. In Thy name we pray, Amen.

CHAPTER 17

Promises Of The Law

Part 17

The Eighth Commandment

Introduction to the Eighth Commandment

Deuteronomy 5:19 says, “Neither shalt thou steal.” Exodus 20:15 says, “Thou shalt not steal.” We are dealing with the Eighth Commandment, and whenever we think of stealing, we think of theft. Everyone knows what theft is—or at least thinks he does. Yet “Thou shalt not steal” covers a multitude of sins, some of which are not readily considered. Theft has implications toward God, man, banks, and government.

Legal Plunder as Theft

Simply because someone has never robbed a bank or stuck a gun in someone’s face and demanded money does not mean that individual is not a thief. There are a multitude of ways to steal. There may be a difference between illegal plunder and legal plunder, but plunder is still theft. Socialism is theft. Communism is theft. Confiscation of

private property is theft. Any individual, institution, or government that violates the Eighth Commandment is a thief, no matter what they say or how they do it.

If we limit our understanding of “Thou shalt not steal” to the forceful taking of that which does not belong to us, our understanding of this commandment is no better than the Pharisees’. The Pharisees limited everything to the physical. Because they did not stick a sword in someone’s face and demand money, they thought they were not thieves. But “Thou shalt not steal” covers a multitude of things.

Rushdoony, in his book on the Institutes of Biblical Law, makes this statement on page 452:

"Theft can be accomplished in a number of ways. First, simple theft: the thief robs the victim directly." That is someone sticking a gun in your face and saying, "Give me your money."

Second, he says, "In complex but still direct theft, the thief robs the victim as part of a group of thieves. In such a case a man may not be directly involved in the act of theft, but he is a party to it all the same, a knowing party in the corporate group of thieves." If I had all of you acting as my thieves and gave you orders to rob somebody or steal from someone, although I am not doing it, I am still a thief, because I am cooperating with you and giving orders. This is what he is talking about here.

Then he says, "Third, theft can be accomplished by indirect and legal means"—that is, "by the passing of law which steals from the rich and the poor or the middle classes for the benefit of a peculiar or particular group."

The state then becomes the agency whereby theft is accomplished, and a pseudo-moral cover is given by a legal enactment. There is a difference between legal plunder and illegal plunder. A very small book titled The Law was written by Frédéric Bastiat, a French economist, statesman, and author. I would encourage you to get it and read it.

Bastiat's Analysis of Legal Plunder

He lived in 1801 and died in 1850. Most of his writing was before the French Revolution, a little during and afterwards as well, until he died, because he was fighting socialism. And he explained in this book how socialism inevitably is going to degenerate into communism. So I want to take the time just to read you a couple of passages. And as I read these passages, I want you to think of country—not France—I want you to think of our Congress and not the French government. So he asks, or he states in this book, how to identify legal plunder. He asks, "But how is this legal plunder to be identified?"

Quite simply: See if the law takes from some persons what belongs to them and it gives to other persons to whom it does not belong. See if the law benefits one citizen at the expense of another by doing what the citizen himself cannot do without committing a crime. Then abolish this law without delay, for it is not only an evil in itself, but it is also a fertile source for further evils, because it invites reprisals. If such a law, which may be an isolated case, is not abolished immediately, it will spread, multiply, and develop into a system. The person who profits from this law will complain bitterly, defending his acquired rights.

He will claim that the state is obligated to protect and encourage his particular industry, and that this enriches the state because the protected industry can spend more and pay higher wages to poor working men. Do not listen to this sophistry by vested interest. Accepting these arguments builds legal plunder into a whole system. In fact, this has already occurred. The present-day delusion attempts to enrich everyone at the expense of everyone else, making plunder universal under the pretense of organizing it.

Legal plunder has many names. It can be committed in an infinite number of ways, producing an infinite number of plans for organizing it: tariffs, protection, benefits, subsidies, encouragements, progressive taxation, public schools, guaranteed jobs, guaranteed profits, minimum wages, a right to relief—or welfare as we would say—a right to the tools of labor, free credit, and so on. All these plans as a whole, with their common aim of legal plunder, constitute socialism.

Since, under this definition, socialism is a body of doctrine, what attack can be made against it other than a war of doctrine? If you find this socialistic doctrine false, absurd, and evil, then refute it. The more false, absurd, and evil it is, the easier it is to refute. Above all, if you wish to be strong, begin by rooting out every particle of socialism that may have crept into your legislation.

This will be no light task." He continues: "'Socialism' is legal plunder. Here's another Frenchman. Mr. de Montalembert has been accused of desiring to fight socialism by the use of brute force. He ought to be exonerated from this accusation, where he's plainly said the war that we fight must be fought against socialism and must be in harmony with law, honor, and justice.

But why does Mr. de Montalembert see that he has placed himself in a vicious cycle? Why does he not see this? You would use the law to oppose socialism, but it is upon the law that socialism itself relies. Socialists desire to practice legal plunder, not illegal plunder. Socialists, like all other monopolists, desire to make the law their own weapon. When once the law is on the side of socialism, how can it then be used against socialism? For when plunder is abetted by the law, it does not fear your courts, your police, or your prisons.

The Three Choices Regarding Plunder

Rather, it may call upon them for help. To prevent this, you would exclude socialism from entering into the making of laws. You would prevent socialists from entering into the legislative palace. You shall not succeed, I predict, so long as legal plunder continues to be the main business of Congress. It is illogical, in fact, absurd to assume otherwise.

There is a choice before us. The question of legal plunder must be settled once and for all, and there are only three ways to settle it. Number one, the few plunder the many. Number two, everybody plunders everybody. Number three, nobody plunders anybody. We must make our choice among limited plunder, universal plunder, or no plunder. The law can follow only one of these three.

Limited legal plunder: this system prevailed when the right to vote was restricted. One would turn back to this system to prevent

the invasion of socialism. Universal legal plunder: We have been threatened with this system since the franchise was made universal. The newly enfranchised majorities decided to formulate the law on the same principle of legal plunder that was used by their predecessors when the vote was limited.

No legal plunder: This is the principle of justice, peace, order, stability, harmony, and logic. Until the day of my death, I shall proclaim this principle with all the force of my lungs, which, alas, is all too inadequate.

America's Entrenchment in Socialism

If you understand that which Mr. Bastiat wrote, you will also understand that we are already deeply entrenched in socialism in our country. When President Trump made the statement that this nation will never become a socialist nation, he did not know whereof he spoke. We are already a socialist nation. Most folks simply do not realize it yet.

Most people have no idea how government is supposed to work, nor do they have any idea how government actually works. There is a big difference between what you and I would call a constitutional republic, which is supposed to be a republic ruled by law, and a Congress that simply makes up rules as it goes. May I remind you that Representative Alcee Hastings of Florida said concerning the House, "There are no rules here."

"We make them up as we go." If that is absolutely true—and it is the reality in this day and time—then our country, our Constitution, our liberty, and our freedoms have all been stolen from us. There is no law. Congress is not bound by anything and would therefore be a simple, tyrannical, despotic, totalitarian body, doing as it pleases with no restraints of any kind whatsoever.

Today I want to demonstrate the various kinds of theft that we commit all the time without thinking of it as theft. I will not be able to get to the positive aspect, or the promise, of this commandment until next week, because today I am going to show you what theft is based upon the Word of God.

Biblical Case Law: The Muzzled Ox

When we talk about the Ten Commandments, we have to understand something about case law in the Bible. First of all, there is a broad principle. The Ten Commandments are basically broad principles. There are other principles in the Bible, but these Ten Commandments basically summarize all the other principles. So you have this very broad principle, and then, secondly, there is always a case law that illustrates that very broad principle. Once you have the case law, you see the broad principle, and you see the case law.

The third thing is that there must be an application. If I were to strike Gary with my fist, and you were all witnesses—I came up and knocked him upside the head—and Gary decided to sue me because he had to go to the doctor and the hospital, he would go to an attorney. The attorney would say, "Now, wait a minute. It's not right that he just walked up and hit you." Why? There is the case, just like this.

It was settled last week. It was—it was Sharpless versus Price, where Price just walked up and hit Sharpless. Everything is basically the same, and since the court ruled for Price—wow—or the court ruled for Sharpless, whichever one was the defendant, it is probably going to work this way in your case. We will take this case, and we will win this case.

They took a broad principle: you shall not act unjustly or do any unjust violence. Then they took a specific case, and the attorney made an application. That is exactly the way it is in the Bible. You have this broad principle, "Thou shalt not steal." Now what is the case law for "Thou shalt not steal"? Look in your Bibles to the book of Deuteronomy, chapter 25 and verse 4. I am going to show you one of the case laws for "Thou shalt not steal." Look, if you would, at Deuteronomy 25 and verse 4. It is a very simple verse. God says, "Thou shalt not muzzle the ox when he treadeth out the corn."

When we read a verse like that, we smile because we think oxen have nothing to do with our society. Obviously, we do not grind out our corn by use of an ox. But circumstances may change while principles do not change. The principle is still with us today. We no

longer use oxen, and we no longer grind our corn out with them, but the principle is still here.

In Bible times, there were two huge stones that turned to grind out the corn. A pole extended from them, and the ox was harnessed to that pole. The ox walked round and round, moving the stones, while the owners poured their corn onto them. The stones ground the corn, and meal came out. Occasionally, some of that corn would fall to the floor. The ox would stop, get a mouthful of corn, and keep going. That would happen maybe

The owners might think, “We can make more money if we muzzle that ox. He will not eat that corn; therefore, we can sweep it up, put it back in the wheels, have more meal, and make more money.” But God says, “No, thou shalt not muzzle the ox when he treadeth out the corn.” The principle is this: if that ox is doing the work, then the ox needs to receive the reward of his work. Let him eat the corn that falls on the floor. This brings us to the principle that the laborer is worthy of his hire.

New Testament Application of the Ox Principle

The passage, “Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn,” in the Old Testament, is quoted twice in the New Testament. In 1 Corinthians 9, Paul first applies this principle to the Corinthians. He asks, “Who goeth a warfare any time at his own charges?” No one. If you are in the army, you are paid, and they buy your equipment; you do not go at your own charges. “Who planteth a vineyard, and eateth not of the fruit thereof?” If you plant a grapevine, you get to eat the grapes. “Or who feedeth a flock, and eateth not of the milk of the flock?” If you have cows or goats, you may milk them.

Then he asks, “Say I these things as a man? or saith not the law the same also? For it is written in the law of Moses, Thou shalt not muzzle the mouth of the ox that treadeth out the corn.” Now watch: “Doth God take care for oxen?” Of course He does, but He did not write that for the oxen’s sake. “Or saith he it altogether for our sakes? For our sakes, no doubt, this is written: that he that ploweth should plow in hope; and that he that thresheth in hope should be partaker of his hope.”

In other words, the laborer is worthy of his reward, and he gets to reap that which he has sown and receives the benefits of his work. God does take care of oxen, that is for sure, but He did not say, "Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn" for the oxen's sake. He said, "For our sake."

In 1 Timothy 5:17–18, we see it again: "Let the elders"—or the pastors—"that rule well be counted worthy of double honor," especially those who labor in the word and doctrine. Now, what does he mean when he talks about ruling? He means that the elders who rule well will be counted worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in the word and doctrine. There are men who actually study, and they not only study; they teach. The Scripture says, "For the scripture saith, Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn. And, The labourer is worthy of his reward."

When he says, "Let the elders"—or the pastors—"that rule well be counted worthy of double honor," that does not mean saying to them, "Yes sir, yes sir," or "Pastor, pastor." The double honor refers to double pay. In other words, the man who actually works, the man who actually does something, and the man who actually provides is worthy of the double honor.

I am not as old as some of you in here and older than a lot of you, but here is something I discovered a long, long time ago: it is easier to pay a higher price to a man who knows what he is doing than to hire four men at a cheaper price who have no idea what they are doing. You understand that? I know men who run bulldozers, backhoes, and things like that. Someone asks, "How much?" and the answer is, "A hundred bucks an hour." Then someone says, "Oh, man, I can get this guy over here for twenty bucks an hour." Yes, but it may take him three days to do what one man could do in six or seven hours. Here is the principle: the laborer is worthy of his hire. It is just that simple.

Withholding Wages and Defrauding Workers

Our Lord tells His disciples, as He sends them out on missions in Luke 10, beginning with verse 5: “And into whatsoever house ye enter, first say, Peace be to this house. And if the son of peace be there, your peace shall rest upon it: if not, it shall turn to you again.

And in the same house remain, eating and drinking such things as they give: for the labourer is worthy of his hire. Go not from house to house." Now, what does that mean?

When I am away preaching, I stay in a home, and I have done that many, many times. When I stay in a home, the host and hostess usually provide most of my meals—not always all of the time, but most of the time. Whatever they set in front of me, I am free to eat, and as much as I want, because that would be part of the reward of my labor for teaching and preaching. I am not free to ask them for something that they do not have or for something that they do not provide. But if they put a big bowl of butter beans, peas, or okra in front of me, I can take all of it I want. That is the meaning of what our Lord told His disciples concerning the food set before them.

That is exactly what He told His disciples, and the reason He said it is that the laborer is worthy of his reward. Here, then, is the principle behind "thou shalt not muzzle the ox when he treadeth out the corn": it is theft to deprive a man of the reward of his labor. The man who labors is entitled to receive the reward that belongs to his labor.

Deuteronomy 24:14-15 says, "Thou shalt not oppress an hired servant that is poor and needy, whether he be of thy brethren, or of thy strangers that are in thy land within thy gates. At his day thou shalt give him his hire, neither shall the sun go down upon it; for he is poor, and setteth his heart upon it: lest he cry against thee unto the LORD, and it be sin unto thee."

Look what God says: You are not to oppress him. You are to give him his hire when it is due; neither shall the sun go down upon it. He is poor, and he has set his heart upon it. If you do not give him his hire, he will cry to the Lord, and it will be sin unto you.

In James chapter 5, he is talking about rich men who have defrauded the people they hired. Verse 1 says, "Go to now, ye rich men, weep and howl for your miseries that shall come upon you." It is because of their corruption. Verse 4 says, "Behold, the hire of the labourers who have reaped down your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud"—in other words, you did not pay them—"crieth: and

the cries of them which have reaped are entered into the ears of the Lord of sabaoth."

Here is the principle: if you defraud a man of his hire, it is theft. Let me put it to you very plainly. Suppose I say, "David, I need help. Would you come up and help me for two days?" He says, "Yes, I'll be glad to do that." I say, "I can only afford to give you 100 bucks a day, plus your room and board." He says, "I'll do that. That's fine." I tell him, "If you'll do this, then I'll pay you on Friday." He says, "Wonderful." He comes up and helps me for a couple of days. Friday comes, and he asks me for his money. I say, "David, I'm sorry. I was just so busy. It slipped my mind. I didn't have time to go to the bank. I didn't have time to do this or that, or some excuse. I tell you what I'll do: I'll pay you next Friday."

Dishonest Weights and Measures

What have I just done? I have stolen his money for a week. I have stolen the use of his money for a week. This is exactly what God is talking about. Have you ever noticed that when banks, insurance companies, and large corporations owe you money, or when you have paid an overage—more than you should have—it usually takes two or three months to get your money? Have you ever wondered about that? Why should it take sixty or ninety days for somebody to sit down and write a check? The answer is that they are stealing the use of your money for that period. They are collecting interest on it. They are making money on it. It is theft.

If they owe you they should pay you. Now there are different ways to steal. You can steal by defrauding someone. You can steal by not paying someone. But look in your Bibles to the book of Leviticus chapter 19. Leviticus chapter 19. And let's begin reading there with verse 35. We'll read several passages just to show you this principle. Leviticus chapter 19. And let's begin reading there with verse 35. We'll read through verse 37. Look what God says: "Ye shall do no unrighteousness in judgment, in meteyard"—that would be like measuring cloth. So if somebody buys 10 yards of material from you, you don't cheat them by giving them nine and a half. You give them ten yards. "Ye shall do no unrighteousness in meteyard, in weight, or in measure." That is, if you sell a bushel of wheat, supposed to be 56

pounds to the bushel, you should not have 54 or 53 or 52. It should be 56. God says in verse 36, "Just balances, just weights, a just ephah"—which was a measurement—"and a just hin"—which was a measure of liquid—"shall ye have: I am the LORD your God, which

brought you out of the land of Egypt. Therefore shall ye observe all my statutes, and all my judgments, and do them: I am the LORD."

Now, turn in your Bibles if you would please to Deuteronomy chapter 25. Deuteronomy 25 and look if you would at verses 13-16. We are still on this same topic. Showing you a different way to be a thief. Deuteronomy chapter 25 beginning there verse 13. God says, "Thou shalt not have in thy bag divers weights"—that is, different weights—"a great and a small. Thou shalt not have in thine house divers measures"—or different measures—"a great and a small. But thou shalt have a perfect and just weight, a perfect and just measure shalt thou have: that thy days may be lengthened in the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee. For all that do such things"—that is, have these different weights and measures, those who cheat and defraud—"all that do unrighteously, are an abomination unto the LORD thy God." So what are you saying? Is this: if we defraud someone of something we owe them, then it is theft.

Theft in Relationships and Obligations

Let me put it together for you. I want you to turn to Romans chapter 13. Romans 13. And look if you would beginning there with verse 7. Romans 13 verse 7. Watch carefully. Romans 13 verse 7. God says this: "Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear;"—what's this?—"honour to whom honour." Now wait a minute. Verse 8.

“Owe no man any thing”—that is, pay what you owe. You may owe honor, love, or money. But Scripture says, “Owe no man any thing, but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law.” It explains: “Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet; and if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbour

as thyself. Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law."

Here is the principle: whatever is withheld from you that you worked for or deserve is a form of theft. God says we are to give honor to whom honor is due. Therefore, when a child—whether little, a teenager, or a grown man—dishonors his parents, he violates not only the Fifth Commandment but also the Eighth, stealing the honor they deserve and merit because they are his parents.

If I fail to love my wife, which God has commanded me, it is theft. If I owe money and refuse to pay it, whatever I owe, it is theft. If I defraud you of that which is rightfully yours, it is theft. Husbands and wives are very usually guilty of fraud.

There are many ways to steal and many ways to defraud. Suppose you want to buy my automobile, and I present it to you as an excellent vehicle in running condition that will take you across the country, while knowing that the transmission is about to go. If I still sell it to you for a premium price, I have stolen from you and defrauded you.

By the same token, if Gary came along and said, "Look at this shiny lump that I just found in my yard," and I said, "Oh, that's fool's gold," while knowing it was real gold, then offered him ten dollars for it when I knew it was worth a thousand dollars, what have I done? I have stolen from him. I have committed theft and defrauded him.

Husbands and wives are also great thieves many times without intending to be and without knowing it. Look in your Bibles to 1 Corinthians chapter 7, beginning with verse 1. God says, "Now concerning the things whereof ye wrote unto me: It is good for a man not to touch a woman." That does not mean I could not shake hands with Effie or hug Lorraine. It means I cannot touch them lustfully or covetously, because He goes on to explain it: "Nevertheless, to avoid fornication, let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband."

"Let the husband render unto the wife due benevolence"—that is, he is to take care of her needs—"and likewise also the wife unto the husband." She is to take care of his needs. "The wife hath not power

of her own body, but the husband: and likewise also the husband hath not power of his own body, but the wife."

"Defraud ye not one the other"—there's theft. "Defraud ye not one the other, except it be with consent for a time, that ye may give yourselves to fasting and prayer; and come together again, that Satan tempt you not for your incontinency."

Notice that the husband is to render to the wife due benevolence, and likewise the wife to the husband. "The wife hath not power of her own body, but the husband." In other words, if the husband needs the wife, the husband has power over the wife's body. "Well, I have a headache." "I'm sorry, honey. I have power over your body." The wife also has power over the husband. "Well, I need you, but I had a hard day at work. I'm tired. I'm sorry."

Marriage is more than a covenant. It is a ministry. You minister to the needs of your spouse. That is exactly what he is saying. When people try to manipulate, withhold themselves, leverage, or use anger and resentment, God says it is theft.

When he says, "Defraud ye not one the other," in the Greek it is a present active imperative, which means it is a command. It is not a suggestion. God is saying, "Look, this is not based merely upon feelings. It's not based upon emotions. This is based upon a command, plain and simple." If husbands and wives understood this, it would save an awful lot of heartaches, headaches, fusses, fightings, and possibly some marriages as well.

Various Forms of Theft: Time, Property, and Government

The word "defraud" actually means to defraud, to keep back, to rob, to despoil, and to keep back by fraud. That is why husbands and wives are guilty of violating the Eighth Commandment without even blinking an eye. Neither they comprehend nor understand that their actions and attitudes constitute theft under the Eighth Commandment.

I am still talking about violating the Eighth Commandment, "thou shalt not steal." There are numerous ways to steal. So Steve and I need to take care of some business, and I tell Steve, "I will meet you

tomorrow on Main Street in front of such-and-such store at 10 a.m. and we'll take care of this." Fine, he agrees. And I'm there at 10 a.m.

When someone does not show up until 10:30, he has stolen thirty minutes of my time. I understand if the providence of God hinders him—a flat tire, a motor that blows up, or a broken leg or arm. That is no big deal. But most of the time, when we are late, it is because of poor planning or a lack of consideration. Alice can tell you that I have basically lived by this principle all my life. I suppose I was taught it as a boy because my dad was very punctual: “If you’re not fifteen minutes early, you’re late.” At Front Sight they say, “If you can’t be on time, be early.” This is one way we begin to steal from each other.

We do not even think about it. We simply say, “He’ll just have to wait for me.” Really? Why not call him and say, “I’m going to be running late. Is there something else you can do?” Do not steal someone’s time.

Here is another way: the misuse and abuse of private property is also theft. It does not have to be rental property, although every time I tried to rent a house to help someone, I lost. On one occasion, unhappily, it was a preacher. The only way people can rent property today is to be there and stay on top of it every week. Otherwise, people will destroy the property and beat you out of the rent. I have seen pictures of places renters left. They ripped out the commode and sink and tore up the kitchen just to get back at the owner. That is vandalism as well, but it is theft.

I knew a preacher who is now dead. He trained preacher boys who were considered fundamentalists and Bible believers to enter, for instance, a Roman Catholic or liberal church and literally take over the pulpit, push someone aside, or stand up, speak loudly, and preach the gospel. You had to be bold and brazen to do that, but it was also theft. That was their property, their meeting, their time, and their people.

I am sorry if someone believes a false gospel or does not believe the Bible, but I am not going to steal his property or time simply to proclaim the gospel. You can never do wrong in order to get a chance

to do what is right. Anytime you abuse or misuse private property, it is theft.

Eminent domain is governmental theft. It means the government can take your property for what it deems the public good. Government has stolen property and sold it to private enterprises, where there was no public good. Usually, when they come with eminent domain, they either steal your property or offer you a ridiculously low price. You may say, "I am not going to take this; I am going to fight it in court." You can, but it may cost you ten times as much to fight it, and you usually end up losing. It is theft, pure and simple.

When you talk about theft, you have to ask yourself: Does it apply only to individuals, or does it also apply to families, churches, societies, and governments? The answer is yes. When God says, "Thou shalt not steal," He does not exempt the government, political leaders, churches, or societies. Governments and rulers can steal in many ways. Occasionally, they use force for eminent domain or confiscation of goods; literally, they may do so under threat of imprisonment or death. Most of the time, this is covered under the guise of legality.

Consider property tax. Property tax is as unbiblical and ungodly as it can be, and it is a form of theft. If you pay $2,500 in property tax, probably $1,500 or $1,800 goes to support the public school, the government school. I had four children, and none of them ever attended a day of public school. It is not my responsibility to support somebody else's children. If they want their children to attend a public school, a private school, or a Christian school, that is their choice, but it is not my responsibility to support somebody else's children. Let me point something out when we talk about property tax.

Do you understand the ramifications? Suppose I said to Francis, “I really like your car. You have a nice car. So what I want you to do this coming week is pay me five hundred dollars in tax because you have such a nice car.” How can I tax something that I do not even own? Do you know what the Bible says in Psalm 24:1? “The earth is the LORD’s, and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein.” Psalm 50:12 says, “If I were hungry, I would not tell thee:

for the world is mine, and the fulness thereof." Psalm 89:11 says, "The heavens are thine, the earth also is thine: as for the world and the fulness thereof, thou hast founded them." First Corinthians 10:26 says, "For the earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof," and verse 28 repeats, "For the earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof."

For a state to say, "We're going to tax your property," it is saying, "We're God. We own the world, the land, and the property. We have stolen it from the sovereign God of heaven and earth; now you pay us the tax." In Leviticus 25:23, God said, "The land shall not be sold for ever: for the land is mine." The theological ramifications of property tax are therefore horrendous, because it is stealing that which belongs to God.

Inflation as Theft and Conclusion

There are many ways to steal. Have you ever stopped to think that inflation is theft? Inflation is the hidden, or unseen, tax. If you want to be surprised, type "inflation calculator" into your computer. You can calculate the inflation rate from any year up through at least last year. I did it for 1963, the year Alice and I were married. When we were married, I tell people, "Man, I was in the money."

I started out at a job making $65 a week. You say, "That's not much money." Oh, you don't know. Jack Roper, a motorcycle cop for the city of Thomasville, had worked for them for ten years, and he was only making $60 a week at the time. As an eighteen-year-old, I started out at $65 a week. Then I got a $5-a-week raise every quarter. So, yes, that was a lot of money.

I'll show you how much money it was. I would give Alice ten bucks a week to buy our groceries for the week, and I would say something if she didn't bring two or three dollars of it back. Do you realize? She would buy milk, bread, eggs, meat, and vegetables, and the two of us could eat all week long on six or seven bucks. I bet you remember something like that. Today, you can't even walk out of a grocery store with three or four bags of groceries without spending $200. Do you know why?

You say, “Well, it’s inflation. Prices go up.” Why do prices go up? Because the value of your money continues to go down, and it requires more and more money to buy the same product. The rise in prices is indicative of the worthlessness of the money. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics Consumer Price Index, prices in 2018 were 721 times higher than average prices throughout 1963. In other words, $1,000 in 1963 was equivalent in purchasing power to $8,206.11 in 2018. It takes over $8,000 to buy what $1,000 did in 1963.

The truth is this: the Federal Reserve and the Federal Reserve Banks are thieves. The more money they print, the more worthless is that which you have; it continues to go down in value. Their money is created out of thin air. If you went to the bank and said, “I need to borrow $10,000,” and the banker agreed, saying, “I’ll put that in your account. Sign right here,” no money would actually be put in your account. Electronic digits would be added to it. Money is created out of thin air. When the Federal Reserve prints it, it is created out of thin air. There is nothing backing it.

If you and I held to a strictly biblical money system or a constitutional money system, it would be silver and gold. Every time you give a $100 bill to some of these little cashiers, they hold it up to the light to make sure that little strip is in there. Every time they do, I say, “It’s fake. The government prints it.” If it were real, it would be silver and gold.

Some of us remember a $20 gold piece. A $20 gold piece from 1932 would purchase 482 gallons of gas, 427 gallons of milk, 675 dozen eggs, and 2,700 first-class stamps. A $20 Federal Reserve note today—and this is pushing it—would buy seven gallons of gas, 6.3 gallons of milk, 10 dozen eggs, and 40 first-class stamps. But here is the kicker: in 1932, you could take a $20 Federal Reserve note that said, “This is redeemable in gold or silver,” to the bank and receive a $20 gold piece. Or you could take a $20 gold piece and receive a paper $20 Federal Reserve note.

Today, of course, you cannot do that. There is no gold backing anything, and there is no silver backing anything. So, if you had a $20 gold piece instead of a $20 Federal Reserve note, look what you could buy. Here is the question: Who stole your wealth? Who stole

your gas, your milk, your eggs, and your postage stamps? All of that purchasing power is gone because we do not have money. We have rampant inflation because the paper is absolutely worthless. The only thing keeping the paper in circulation today is that some people think it is still money. It is worthless.

There are multitudes of ways to steal, and we are stolen from every day without even thinking about it. Oftentimes we steal from others without even thinking about it. And God says, “Thou shalt not steal.”

You say, “Well, what is the positive of the second commandment? And what is the positive of the eighth commandment? And what is the promise in the eighth commandment?” But until then, thou shalt not steal.

Father, thank you for your love. Thank you for your grace. Thank you for your mercy. Thank you for your word and truth. Teach us thy law and teach us, Lord, to be holy and righteous and godly. In thy name we pray. Amen.

CHAPTER 18

Promises of the Law

Part 18

The Broadness of the Eighth Commandment

Introduction and Review of the Eighth Commandment

Deuteronomy chapter 5, verse 19, says, “Neither shalt thou steal.” Of course, in Exodus chapter 20, the Scripture reads, “Thou shalt not steal.” This is part two of the Eighth Commandment, and I hope you are beginning to see the broadness of God’s law. David enunciated this principle in Psalm 119:96: “I have seen the end of all perfection, but thy commandment is exceeding broad.” The Eighth Commandment is indeed a good illustration of the broadness of God’s commandments.

When we think about theft, theft is far more than sticking a weapon in someone’s face and simply demanding money. All types of fraud, cheating, deception, withholding honor, and withholding anything that is due one are classified as theft according to the Word of God. Each one of these acts violates the Eighth Commandment.

While it is wicked and wrong to withhold honor, love, and respect when they are due, and it is classified as theft, it is not as violent as sticking a gun in someone's face; yet at the same time, it is still theft.

There is also a vast difference between what we would call illegal plunder and legal plunder. Obviously, illegal plunder is when you rob someone at gunpoint or break into their home while they are away. Then there is legal plunder, which is indeed accomplished by governments.

Legal Plunder and Governmental Theft

Ezekiel 45:9 says, "Thus saith the Lord God, Let it suffice you, O princes of Israel: remove violence and spoil, and execute judgment and justice, take away your exactions from my people, saith the Lord God." Verse 10 continues, "You shall have just balances, and a just ephah, and a just bath." God is saying that inflation, spoil, unjust exactions—which are taxes, by the way—unbiblical money systems, and all such things are forms of governmental theft.

Such acts may be considered legal by the government, but according to the Bible they are illegal and violate God's law. The root of America's economic problem, and of the economic problems of all the other countries, is a failure to fear and honor the one true and living God, who has revealed Himself in the Lord Jesus Christ. Let me show you.

The Root of Economic Problems: Failure to Fear God

In Luke 18, beginning with verse 1, the Word of God says: "And he spake a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint; saying, There was in a city a judge, which feared not God, neither regarded man: and there was a widow in that city; and she came unto him, saying, Avenge me of mine adversary. And he would not for a while: but afterward he said within himself, Though I fear not God, nor regard man; yet because this widow troubleth me, I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me. And the Lord said, Hear what the unjust judge saith. And shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them? I tell you that he will avenge

them speedily. Nevertheless when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?" Or at least this kind of faith.

There are many principles taught in Luke chapter 18, but there is one particularly that I wish to emphasize right now. The Bible talks about this unjust judge. We are talking about someone with authority, a governmental official, someone in a position of power. Notice what he said: "Though I fear not God, nor regard man."

Here is the principle: when rulers do not fear God, they will never, ever regard man. The reason there is so much corruption today among our rulers is simply because they do not fear God. We are at that point right now in time and in history.

It is not truth, righteousness, and justice that moves our government and the governments of the world. The only thing that moves them today is their own desires and their own corruption, or enough pressure put on them by the people that would make them do something they probably do not wish to do: act decently and act right until they can get back to their stealing and their corruption.

It's kind of like Senator Everett Dirksen said, who is now dead, by the way: "When I feel the heat, then I see the light." In other words, they're not willing to do anything right until you really and truly put the heat on them. So our politicians today—and by the way, I did not say statesmen. There's a vast difference. I got criticized one day for saying that my president was Jefferson Davis, the only president we had in the South. Someone said, "Well, you are talking about a dead president." I said, "I would rather have a dead statesman than a living politician any day of the week."

When you stop and think that our modern-day politicians do not even consider the Constitution of the United States, even though they took an oath to uphold it, the Constitution to them is nothing more than an inconvenience, something to work around. If a modern-day politician will not honor the Constitution and his oath to uphold it, what makes you think they would honor God and His Word?

Obviously they would not. If they will destroy their own families, why should we expect them to try to save our families? Any man or woman who will readily violate his oath, especially to his spouse, his

marriage, his home, and the Constitution, will not hesitate to destroy my property, rights, and freedom. If he will do that to his own, what will he do to those who are not his own?

Now, before I get into the positive side of the Eighth Commandment, the point I want to make is that theft does indeed have consequences. I am not talking merely about someone going to prison, nor about someone getting shot because he is endeavoring to rob someone with a concealed weapon and it goes south for him. There are consequences—national consequences. Let me just show you.

National Consequences of Theft: Robbing God

Remember this principle from Luke chapter 18: when men do not fear God, they will not regard man. In Malachi, the last book before Matthew, chapter 3, God asks this question: "Will a man rob God?" The answer is yes; men will rob God. Follow this carefully: if men will rob God, they will not hesitate to rob their fellow man. It is the same principle that you have in Luke chapter 18: when you do not fear God, you will not regard man.

God says, "Yet ye have robbed me." Yes, men will rob God. But they ask, "Wherein have we robbed thee?" God says, "I will tell you where you've robbed me. You've robbed me in tithes and in offerings." Now watch verse 9: "Ye are cursed with a curse: for ye have robbed me, even this whole nation." Remember that there are national consequences to theft. Nations are made up of individuals, and individuals inhabit nations. Therefore, when God speaks of this whole nation, He is speaking of the consequences that come upon a nation through the actions of its individuals.

Now watch verse 10: "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." He continues, "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." Then He says, "And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, and he shall not destroy the fruits of your ground; neither shall your vine cast her fruit before the time in the field, saith the Lord of hosts." And He adds, "And all nations shall

call you blessed: for ye shall be a delightsome land, saith the Lord of hosts."

Consider verse 9 again: "Ye are cursed with a curse, even this whole nation." A failure to tithe, in one sense of the word, is theft. It is theft from God. And if a man will rob God, he will not hesitate to rob his fellow man. But there is more to it than simply this. Here are the consequences. Look at verse 11: "And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, and he shall not destroy the fruits of your ground; neither shall your vine cast her fruit before the time in the field, saith the Lord of hosts."

In other words, the nation of Israel was cursed economically. They were cursed agriculturally because there was a failure to recognize God and to honor God. A tithe is nothing more than God's tax for the use of His earth and breathing His air. When an individual tithes, he is recognizing God's sovereign ownership of everything, and he is recognizing the fact that everything he has has been given to him by the grace and by the mercy of God. And so God says, when you dishonor me and you fail to recognize this and you fail to confess this, then you are cursed with a curse. Part of that curse, of course, is the destruction of agriculture.

Think of the floods, the tornadoes, the hurricanes, and the droughts. There is an overabundance of rain out west, and here we are suffering and needing some rain here in the south. Someone can say, "You know, that is man's doing." I understand that, but God is still sovereign, God is still in control, and man cannot thwart the purpose of God. This is simply a consequence of what you and I would call a failure to honor God and to recognize God. There are going to be national consequences as well as individual, societal, ecclesiastical, and familial consequences.

Consequences of Not Putting God First

The book of Haggai is an excellent example of the fact that thou shalt not steal. Here is the principle: if God is not honored first, it is theft. Failure to give God His tithe, failure to give God honor and recognition, is sin. But it is more than that. It is a failure to recognize God and put His work first. Notice Haggai chapter 1, and the first 11 verses. There is a phrase here that occurs twice. I want to emphasize

this and show you again the consequences for failing to put God first. In verse 1: "In the second year of Darius the king, in the sixth month, in the first day of the month, came the word of the Lord by Haggai the prophet unto Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Joshua the son of Josedech the high priest, saying,"

“Thus saith the Lord of hosts, saying, This people say, The time is not come, the time that the Lord’s house should be built.” We are talking about the Second Temple. The people had already returned from the dispersion and Babylonian captivity, yet they said the time was not ready to build the Temple.

“Then came the word of the Lord by Haggai the prophet, saying, Is it time for you, O ye, to dwell in your cieled houses, and this house lie waste?” In other words, it was time for them to fix up their own places, making them real nice and fancy, while God’s house lay waste. Then God said, “Now therefore thus saith the Lord of hosts; Consider your ways.”

This is the first occurrence of that phrase. Consider what God says in verse 6: “Ye have sown much, and bring in little; ye eat, but ye have not enough; ye drink, but ye are not filled with drink; ye clothe you, but there is none warm; and he that earneth wages earneth wages to put it into a bag with holes.” If you put money in a bag with holes, it will fall out, especially if it is real money, silver and gold. God says they are going to lose it. He is speaking of insufficiency, a lack of necessities, and the impossibility of getting ahead.

Then the phrase occurs again: “Thus saith the Lord of hosts; Consider your ways.” You better think about this, God says. “Go up to the mountain, and bring wood, and build the house; and I will take pleasure in it, and I will be glorified, saith the Lord.”

Here are the consequences of failing to put God first: “Ye looked for much, and, lo, it came to little; and when ye brought it home, I did blow upon it. Why? saith the Lord of hosts. Because of mine house that is waste, and ye run every man unto his own house.” They were so busy taking care of themselves that they had forgotten God. “Therefore the heaven over you is stayed from dew, and the earth is stayed from her fruit. And I called for a drought upon the land, and upon the mountains, and upon the corn, and upon the new wine,

and upon the oil, and upon that which the ground bringeth forth, and upon men, and upon cattle, and upon all the labour of the hands."

They had failed to honor God, recognize Him, and put Him first. Consequently, they were deprived economically, deprived of essentials, and deprived in their production; nothing was working out because they were interested only in taking care of themselves. When a person fails to tithe and honor God, it is more than simple theft. It is idolatry, because he is putting himself before God.

The Positive Side of the Eighth Commandment

And this is exactly what he is saying. The society, the people in the nation that refuse to acknowledge, confess, recognize, and honor God will be cursed economically. That is plain and simple. You can find that in the book of Isaiah, in Haggai, in Malachi, and in a multitude of places. So we have to understand that when we say, "Thou shalt not steal," there is a primary reference to God as well.

We have been dealing with the negative side of the Eighth Commandment, "Thou shalt not steal." There is also a positive side. If God tells us, "Thou shalt not steal," then the positive is, "Thou shalt work and earn your money, your wealth, honestly." Actually, there is even more to it than that. Ephesians 4:28 states, "Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth."

So "Thou shalt not steal" is the negative. The positive side of the Eighth Commandment is not merely working honestly, laboring truthfully and honestly, but also developing a gracious, kind, generous, and charitable disposition, "that he may have to give to him that needeth."

Now, you have to stop and ask yourself this question: What makes someone steal? There are a multitude of answers. People steal because they are depraved, because they are sinners. People steal because they are covetous; that is understandable as well. But just because a man covets or desires something does not necessarily mean that he has to steal. He could covet or desire something badly

enough that he is willing to work, earn the money, and buy whatever he genuinely desires.

The truth of the matter is this: the Eighth Commandment not only forbids stealing and theft; it enjoins honest labor and a godly disposition that is willing to share and willing to give. So the hands that stole, let them steal no more, but rather let them labor, working with their hands the thing which is good, that they may have to give to him that needeth.

The clearly implied promise in the Eighth Commandment really is this: if you and I obey it—if we obey the negative aspect by not stealing, and the positive aspect by laboring with our hands the thing which is good—we will learn and develop in our lives what is known as a biblical work ethic. Work is opposed to theft. Having a generous, gracious, charitable disposition is opposed to theft, covetousness, and selfishness. In other words, if we obey God, God is saying that we are going to have a certain thing in our lives called character.

The Biblical Work Ethic and Slothfulness as Theft

When you think about money, wealth, and property, there are basically only three ways to acquire wealth and property: theft, work, and inheritance.

Theft, of course, is condemned in all shapes, forms, and practices of it, in any way whatsoever. It is all a violation of the Eighth Commandment. But theft is not only a violation of the Eighth Commandment; it is also a violation of the First Commandment. When a man steals, what he is doing is placing himself above God. Thus he becomes an idolater. God says, “Thou shalt not steal,” but the man says, “Well, God says I shall not steal, but I want it, and so I’m going to take it.” Therefore, he exalts himself above God and places his desires and his needs above the Word of God.

Proverbs chapter 30 shows this in context, beginning with verse 7 and reading through verse 9: “Two things have I required of thee; deny me them not before I die.” The man is asking two things from God. What are they? Number one: “Remove far from me vanity and lies.” Number two: “Give me neither poverty nor riches.” Then he asks, “Feed me with food convenient for me: lest I be full, and deny

thee, and say, Who is the Lord? or lest I be poor, and steal, and take the name of my God in vain."

Therefore, a violation of the Eighth Commandment is not only a violation of the First Commandment; it is also a violation of the Third Commandment: "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain."

Man's needs cannot take priority over God's law. Someone says, "But I have needs." Everyone has needs. But your needs cannot take priority over God's law. Your needs do not and cannot give you the right to violate the law of God. God is sovereign. God is supreme. Christianity produces honest men—men willing to live right and do right simply because it is right.

Adam Clarke said, "If Christianity does not make men honest, it does nothing for them. Those who are not saved from dishonesty fear not God, though they may dread man." Those who are not saved from dishonesty fear not God. There is no such thing as a holy thief. There is no such thing as a godly thief. There is no such thing as an obedient thief. When God saves a man, He makes him honest. Therefore, we cannot acquire our wealth by theft.

Secondly, there is nothing wrong with receiving an inheritance. However, oftentimes the inheritance has gone through rather quickly simply because the recipient did not value the work, the labor, the planning, the saving, and the sacrifice that went into providing that inheritance.

It is true that a godly man layeth up an inheritance for his children and his children's children. If my father had given me a million dollars when I was twenty-one, it would have been gone by the time I was twenty-five, or earlier. I knew of one man in this state who received a million-dollar award, and by the time the year was over, he was broke. There is nothing wrong with an inheritance.

But the Bible says in Proverbs 20:21, "An inheritance may be gotten hastily at the beginning; but the end thereof shall not be blessed." When someone gives you an inheritance and you do not really appreciate it, you may quickly go through it because you do not understand the work, the planning, and the saving involved, and very quickly devastate that inheritance. An inheritance requires

thought, it requires planning, and it certainly requires sacrifice. Proverbs 13:22 says, "A good man leaveth an inheritance to his children's children: and the wealth of the sinner is laid up for the just."

Stop and think about this: “A good man leaveth an inheritance to his children's children.” So it is not just his children; it is his grandchildren as well. I have told my children and grandchildren, “I am willing to help you as long as you are willing to do what is right. I will break my neck to help you. But if you think for one minute I am going to help you do wrong, you are mistaken. I am not going to help you do what is wrong.”

I am not going to take what little bit the Lord has given me and give it to someone who is going to blow it or throw it away. I am simply not going to do it. I am not going to give an inheritance to a drunkard, a dopehead, a harlot, or a whoremonger. We are responsible to take care of our own, that is for sure, but we are also equally responsible to be stewards over that which God has given us. I have instructed my wife, if I die before her, concerning my vast library.

I told her that I do not mind my girls and grandchildren pulling out books they would want, value, and use. If they do not need the money to sell them, they should give them to preachers or to somebody who is going to use them. They should not let the books just sit there, collect dust, and rot. The point is this: although God says a good man does indeed lay up an inheritance for his children's children, that does not mean we allow them to destroy everything God has given us and everything we have worked for all our lives.

The truth of the matter is this: most of us will never receive a large inheritance. Most of us are not going to wake up in the morning with a telegram in our hand saying that a rich uncle whom we never knew just died and left us 20 million bucks. It is not going to happen. So, if we cannot steal, which we cannot based upon God's law, and we are not going to receive an inheritance, that leaves work as the only way to acquire wealth and property.

The work ethic is clearly taught in the Bible. Unhappily, most people today do not hold, have, or possess a biblical work ethic. They

do not understand it; they have never been taught it, and they will never acquire it. One of the greatest failures that parents have committed in this day and age, and probably in the last 30 to 50 years, is that we have not taught our children to work.

You would be absolutely astounded at the teenagers who can do absolutely nothing except play games on a computer. They cannot work; they cannot function; they cannot do anything. There is a biblical work ethic, and the Bible tells us that man is to earn his living by the sweat of his brow. In Genesis 3 and verse 19, God said, "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return." By the sweat of your brow.

Work is not a product of the fall. Work was before the fall. Adam had to till the garden, keep the garden, and protect the garden. Work only became onerous after the fall. I suppose sweat and gnats are part of it. But work is not a product of the fall.

What God requires is that whatever we do, we do it honestly. We labor for His honor and His glory, not just for our good, but also for the good of others. And we seek God to establish the work of our hands. Moses prayed that in Psalm 90 and verse 17: "Let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us: and establish thou the work of our hands upon us; yea, the work of our hands establish thou it." If God does not establish the work of our hands, it will never be established.

One of these days you are going to hear the words, "Well, John Weaver's dead." You may say, "We have all these recordings, CDs, and DVDs." But if God does not establish it, they will die with me. That is why Moses said, "Establish thou the work of our hands."

The positive side of the Eighth Commandment is not merely working or having a charitable disposition. It is also what we would call independence and self-sufficiency. We work in order to provide for ourselves and our family, so that we will not be dependent upon the public dole, food stamps, WIC, and a host of other governmental subsidies and programs.

Most of you have seen this. I have a picture of it here in the state of Florida. A sign in big, bold letters said, "Office of Economic Self-Sufficiency." Underneath it were the words, "Apply here for

SNAP food stamps, cash assistance, Medicaid." The sign was put out by the Florida Department of Family and Children's Services. I do not quite grasp their concept of self-sufficiency. If I am self-sufficient, I do not need their help. I cannot be self-sufficient by being dependent upon Gary, James, and David. Self-sufficiency means being independent and able to take care of yourself.

The problem with a lot of these governmental programs and governmental welfare is that people tend to think that it is owed to them. After a while, if they do not get it, they are willing to riot, revolt, and rebel because it is owed to them. Let me tell you something, folks: the welfare mentality is nothing more than a slave mentality. You have heard the old adage, "Come shekels, come shackles." And that is the truth.

Here is another problem with governmental welfare. I am not opposed to helping people; please understand that. But I have news for you: I am not interested in helping someone who is not going to work. I am not interested in helping a whoremonger. I am not interested in providing contraceptives for whoremongers. I am not interested in providing free needles for drug addicts. I am not interested in providing free alcohol for drunkards. No, that is not my responsibility. It is not even my responsibility to provide a government education for your children. That is your responsibility: to provide an education for your children.

The Apostle Paul told the Thessalonian Christians a truth that he enunciated while he was there. This is God's attitude toward this matter. In 2 Thessalonians chapter 3 and verse 10, the Bible says: "For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat." If any would not work, neither should he eat. If you will not work, go ahead and starve. It is not my responsibility to feed somebody who will not work or who refuses to work.

I might be willing to help someone who is unable to work. But for someone who is simply too sorry and too lazy to work, it is not my responsibility to feed them. The apostle said, "Let them die out." That is one way to get rid of them. I would just imagine most people heading toward starvation would probably find a little motivation to do something to head off actual death. They could find a lawn to

mow or trash to pick up. They can do something to get a little burger or something to eat so that they would not starve.

The very fact that you give to people who will not work is like this: for about three or four years in a row, as I was going from Nevada to California to preach, we were driving, and on the left-hand side of the road was this woman with these little kids in this minivan. The sign said, "Help, out of gas, need food, anything will be appreciated." She was there three years in a row. Obviously, she was living off begging, is what it amounts to.

I remember being in California preaching in a church. As the pastor was driving, we came up off the interstate, and on top of the overpass there was a man begging for food. I asked the pastor, "Do you ever give to these people?" He said, "No. They make more money than I do. Some of them make over $100,000 a year just begging." It is not my responsibility to give to somebody who will not work.

In light of what I am teaching you, in light of the positive aspect of the Eighth Commandment, we must consider that slothfulness, idleness, laziness, and indolence are forms of theft as well, because we are stealing time and production while enslaving ourselves and denying common sense and biblical law. The book of Proverbs shows what God says about slothfulness. In Proverbs, "slothful" means laziness, indolence, or idleness.

All of those are interchangeable. Proverbs 12:24 says, "The hand of the diligent shall bear rule: but the slothful shall be under tribute." What is the lazy man going to end up being? Somebody's servant, somebody's slave, because he is not diligent. Slothfulness is the opposite of diligence.

Proverbs 12:27 says, "The slothful man roasteth not that which he took in hunting: but the substance of a diligent man is precious." Can you imagine going deer hunting, killing a deer, getting it home, and letting it rot—never even gutting it, skinning it, cleaning it, or quartering it? No. The diligent man will take care of whatever is his, even that which he killed in hunting.

Proverbs 15:19 says, "The way of the slothful man is as an hedge of thorns: but the way of the righteous is made plain." A slothful man is

pricked every time he wants to do something. It hurts him. He does not want to give in.

Proverbs 18:9 says, “He also that is slothful in his work is brother to him that is a great waster.” Slothfulness and wastefulness go together. Proverbs 19:24 says, “A slothful man hideth his hand in his bosom, and will not so much as bring it to his mouth again.” He is so lazy he does not even want to eat.

I remember when I was a boy, they used to tell the story—and it is just a story—about a man who was so lazy and so sorry that he was going to die.

They were taking him to the cemetery to bury him. He was not dead, but they knew he was going to die, and they were waiting to bury him. As they traveled, they passed another wagon. When the wagons met, the man asked, “Where are you going?” “To the cemetery.” “Why?” “This fellow is going to die because he is starving to death.” The man replied, “He did not have to do that. I have a wagon load of corn here. He can have some of my corn.” The starving man raised his head and asked, “Is it already shucked?” “No.” “Drive on.”

That is exactly what this is: the slothful man puts his hand in his bosom and does not want to take it to his mouth again. He is so sorry and so lazy. Proverbs 21:25 says, “The desire of the slothful killeth him; for his hands refuse to labour.” The desire of the slothful killeth him.

I do not know what it is like in every city in America, but in just about every southern city there is always a group of men sitting around somewhere all day long, drinking, smoking, and talking, refusing to work. They can see a nice Cadillac go by and say, “I sure would like to have one of those Cadillacs,” but they will never have it because their hands refuse to work. So the desire of the slothful killeth him, for his hands refuse to labour.

Proverbs 22:13 says, "The slothful man saith, There is a lion without, I shall be slain in the streets." "Lord, I can't go out to work today. There's a lion out there and he might eat me up." If one escaped from a zoo somewhere, there may be a lion around, but not usually.

Proverbs 24:30 says, "I went by the field of the slothful, and by the vineyard of the man void of understanding." Put that together: the slothful man, the lazy man, the indolent man is a man that does not possess understanding. I could be kind and say it like that, or I could just be unkind and say he's just stupid. But that's what the Bible means. "I went by the field of the slothful, and by the vineyard of the man void of understanding: and, lo, it was all grown over with thorns, and nettles had covered the face thereof, and the stone wall thereof was broken down."

"Then I saw, and considered it well: I looked upon it, and received instruction. Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep: so shall thy poverty come as one that travelleth, and thy want as an armed man." Your slothfulness is going to end up in misery and poverty, because the slothful man will not work.

Proverbs 26:14-15 gives another picture: "As the door turneth upon his hinges, so doth the slothful upon his bed." The slothful man hides his hand in his bosom; it grieveth him to bring it again to his mouth. As a door turns upon its hinges, so the slothful man turns upon his bed. He just rolls over, won't get out of bed, and won't work.

In verse 16, he is called a sluggard: "The sluggard is wiser in his own conceit than seven men that can render a reason." I have never understood—though I know people are built differently and I understand work schedules—how anybody could stay in bed until ten or eleven o'clock in the morning. I was awake this morning at 4:30. I didn't get out of bed at 4:30, but I was awake then, and I was out of bed before six.

But the point is this: if you work third shift, I understand that. But for somebody simply to stay in bed and sleep, I cannot grasp that. I cannot even grasp a woman walking around in her nightgown and housecoat at eleven or twelve o’clock in the day. That is beyond me. I have identical twin girls. When they were little, they could sleep until twelve o’clock; they do not now, I am sure. But I have never been able to do that. This is what the Bible is saying: the slothful man is the man who will not get out of bed. You have to get out of bed. You have to work.

As Christians, we are commanded not to be slothful, lazy, or indolent. We cannot be shiftless, disobedient, and worthless. Romans 12:11 says, "Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord." We are not to be slothful in business. Whatever we do, we are to take care of it—punctually and correctly. Hebrews 6:12 says, "That ye be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises." God forbids us to be slothful, indolent, lazy, shiftless, and worthless.

Applications for Christians

If you understand the Eighth Commandment, you understand that "thou shalt not steal" covers all of those ways of stealing. But God is saying more than that. You must learn a biblical work ethic, do all things for God's honor and glory, and learn to be unselfish and generous. First Corinthians 10:31 says, "Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God." If eating and drinking are to be done for God's honor and glory, much more must our work be done for that purpose. If we are obedient to the Eighth Commandment, we will possess a biblical work ethic. We will learn to work.

I genuinely believe this: if I had time to go to the book of Genesis, one of the reasons people are so dissatisfied and cannot be satisfied is because they really do not work. There is a satisfaction that is achieved in doing something, doing it well, and doing it right. I will tell wives this: if you do not believe that, just watch your husband when he comes home from work. If he has had a bad day at the office or could not accomplish what he needed to on the job, he is always frustrated. Nothing you can do will satisfy him if he cannot be satisfied in his work. That is why God said man shall earn his living by the sweat of his brow.

So let me make some applications. The first one is this: every Christian should have some calling, business, or profession by which he should support himself and his family. You must remember that Jesus Christ was a carpenter. Paul, Aquila, and Priscilla were tent makers. Luke was a physician. Peter and the other disciples were fishermen. There is no disgrace in any job as long as it is honest, and

you are doing that which you are doing for God's honor and God's glory.

There's nothing wrong with cleaning houses, washing dishes, or digging a ditch. Digging a ditch can be just as edifying as being a doctor or a lawyer, as long as it is done for God's honor and glory and to the best of one's ability. It may be harder work, and one may sweat more, but there is nothing wrong with doing it honestly.

So every Christian should have something. Secondly, if we understand the biblical work ethic, there should be no such thing as a lazy, indolent, slothful Christian. We are taught to work, commanded to work, and should work.

When I was in high school, I wanted to play ball with some of my classmates. I asked my father if I could play, which would take me after school for several hours, and he said no. When I asked why, he said, "Because I need you here to help me." Then he said, "You can live your entire life without learning to play, but you can't live your entire life without learning to work. And you need to learn to work more than you need to learn to play." That is certainly true.

There is a whole Hebrew adage that says, "If one does not teach his son the law"—the law of God—"and a trade, he teaches him to be a rebel and a thief." That is certainly true.

We should also labor so that we might have the means to do good to others and be loving, kind, and generous. We are to support the weak and give willingly and graciously to those who are in biblical need. The Bible says in Romans 12:13, "Distributing to the necessity of saints; given to hospitality."

There is indeed a vast difference between biblical charity and governmental welfare, and between giving to someone on the street and biblical charity. I am not opposed to giving to someone on the street, but I have questions. I have seen people who looked decent, with a decent car, holding up signs asking for money for gas or saying they need to get somewhere. How could a grown man go somewhere without planning or funds to return home? If he is truly stranded, why has he not contacted his family and asked them to send help? There is a difference between biblical charity and what we call welfare today.

But let me point out that if we are going to be obedient to the Eighth Commandment, it is true that we must not steal, but it is also true that we must labor. It is also true that we must have a generous and gracious disposition, and that we should learn to be independent and self-sufficient. “Thou shalt not steal” is an exceedingly broad commandment.

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we bow to Thee this day. We thank You for Your Word and Your truth, and we pray, Lord, that You would indeed teach us. Give us a biblical work ethic. Help us to learn to work for Your honor and Your glory, and establish the work of our hands. Give us grace that we may serve Thee acceptably with reverence and godly fear. In Thy name we ask and pray. Amen.

We should also labor in order that we might have the means to do good to others and to be loving, kind, and generous. We are to support the weak and give willingly and graciously to those who are in biblical need. The Bible says in the book of Romans 12 and verse 13, “Distributing to the necessity of saints; given to hospitality.”

Now, I do not have time to cover this, but there is indeed a vast difference between biblical charity and governmental welfare. There is a vast difference between just giving to someone on the street and biblical charity. I am not opposed to giving to someone on the street, but I have so many questions. I have seen people who looked decent, had a decent car, and were grown, holding up signs asking for money for gas, needing to get somewhere. How could a grown man go somewhere without planning and without the funds to get him back to his house? And my second question is this: if he is truly stranded, why has he not contacted his family and asked them to send help? There is just a difference between biblical charity and what we call today welfare.

We thank You for Your Word and truth. We pray, Lord, that You would teach us and give us a biblical work ethic. Help us learn to work for Your honor and glory. We ask You to establish the work of our hands. Give us grace to serve Thee acceptably with reverence and godly fear. In Thy name we ask and pray. Amen.

CHAPTER 19

Promises of the Law

Part 19

The Ninth Commandment

Introduction and Word Study

Deuteronomy 5:20 states, "Neither shalt thou bear false witness against thy neighbor." The ninth commandment is very simply and plainly stated, much like all the other commandments. In Exodus 20:16, it says, "Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor."

The Hebrew word for "bear" is anah, translated as answer, hear, testify, speak, sing, bear, cry, witness, and give. In other words, it covers anything, any way that you can communicate. He is saying that you are not to be able to carry or bear false witness. The commandment concerns not merely one form of testimony, but anything communicated against your neighbor that is false.

The word "false" comes from the Hebrew word sheqer, translated in our Bibles as lie, lying, false, falsehood, wrongfully, deceitful,

deceit, and liar. Literally, when you look at it, the commandment is very straightforward. God says, "Thou shalt not bear"—that is, carry in any way whatsoever—anything that is false, untrue, or a lie against your neighbor. This reaches anything you might carry or communicate in that way.

Adam Clarke's Commentary on the Ninth Commandment

Adam Clarke wrote concerning the ninth commandment: "Not only false oaths to deprive a man of his life or of his right are here prohibited, but all whispering, telling whatever is deposed as a truth which is in fact false, tends to injure another in his goods, person, or character, is against the spirit and the letter of this law."

He continued: "Suppressing the truth when known, by which a person may be defrauded of his property, or his good name, or lie under injuries or disabilities, which a discovery of the truth would have prevented, is also a crime against this law."

He went further: "He who bears a false testimony against, or belies even the Devil himself, is under the curse of this law because his testimony is false." Thus, the statement applies even when the one falsely represented is the Devil himself, because the testimony remains false.

By the term neighbor, any human being is intended, whether he rank among our enemies or among our friends. Now, the interesting thing is that he also talked there about suppressing the truth. In other words, if you know something is true when someone else is saying something is false, and you suppress the truth, it is still a violation of the ninth commandment.

We are forbidden, according to the ninth commandment, either to bear a false testimony, to raise a false testimony, or to give a false testimony. The truth of the matter is that many godly men have had their lives destroyed because of false testimonies and false accusations. Let me show you something that you may have missed. Look in your Bibles to 1 Timothy chapter 5, verse 19. We are speaking primarily concerning pastors. The Word of God says,

"Against an elder, receive not an accusation, but before two or three witnesses."

Protection for Elders Against False Accusations

An elder in the Bible is a pastor. You remember that in Acts chapter 20 Paul, at Ephesus, called the elders of the church and met with them there. The interesting thing is that he says you are not to receive an accusation against an elder or pastor unless there are two or three witnesses. This means that every word, every accusation, and every charge has to be substantiated. If there are two or three witnesses, then, of course, we know what was said. I have known men who have had their entire lives, families, and ministries destroyed because of a lie, a false charge, or a false accusation.

Oftentimes, when people come to me and want to talk about someone I know, especially a pastor, and begin to say libelous or slanderous things, I simply say, "You know, the best way to settle that is for you and I to call him right now and let's confront him and let's see what his answer is going to be." That usually stifles the entire situation.

Notice that we are not even to receive an accusation or charge against an elder unless there are two or three witnesses. The Greek word here is "kategoria," which literally means a charge or an accusation. Christians are not exempt from this. The sad thing is that people seem to love gossip. They love innuendo. They love slander. They love to repeat things, whether they are true or not.

The Principle: You Do Not Owe Truth to Those Who Abuse It

Often times that is very, very destructive, and God says it is indeed a violation of the ninth commandment. Although the ninth commandment forbids us to bear false witness, it does not command us to share truth that will be detrimental or destructive of other individuals. Let me put it very bluntly and plainly: You do not owe the truth to anyone who is going to abuse and misuse the truth. You can tell the truth sometime and be in more trouble than you know what to do. There are many times it is best just to keep your mouth shut and not say a thing.

Biblical Illustrations of Withholding Truth

But let me give you a good illustration from 1 Samuel chapter 21. There was an Edomite by the name of Doeg, the chief herdman of Saul. Doeg is the man who actually tells the truth, or at least mostly the truth, and causes the deaths of many individuals. Saul was after David and seeking to slay him. Saul even saw David when David was in his bed, but David's wife put an image in the bed, and David escaped out the window. When David fled, he went to Nob, to Ahimelech the priest. David was fleeing from Saul, who was purposely, deliberately, premeditatedly trying to murder him.

1 Samuel 21:1 says, "Then came David to Nob to Ahimelech the priest: and Ahimelech was afraid at the meeting of David." David was a mighty warrior. Ahimelech said to him, "Why art thou alone and no man with thee?" There were a few men with David, but David approached the priest evidently alone. Verse two says, "And David said unto Ahimelech the priest, The king hath commanded me a business, and hath said unto me, Let no man know anything of the business whereabout I send thee, and what I have commanded thee: and I have appointed my servants to such and such a place."

David said, “Now therefore what is under thine hand? Give me five loaves of bread in mine hand, or what there is present.” And the priest answered David, “There is no common bread under my hand, but there is hallowed bread; if the young men have kept themselves at least from women.” David answered the priest, “Of a truth, women have been kept from us about these three days, since I came out, and the vessels of the young men are holy, and the bread is in a manner common, yea, though it were sanctified this day in the vessel.” So the priest gave him hallowed bread: for there was no bread there but the showbread, that was taken from before the Lord, to put hot bread in the day when it was taken away.

Now a certain man of the servants of Saul was there that day, detained before the Lord; and his name was Doeg, an Edomite, the chiefest of the herdmen that belonged to Saul. Doeg was witnessing everything. David said unto Ahimelech, “And is there not here under thine hand spear or sword? For I have neither brought my sword nor my weapons with me, because the king’s business required haste.”

The priest said, “The sword of Goliath the Philistine, whom thou slewest in the valley of Elah, behold, it is wrapped in a cloth behind the ephod: if thou wilt take that, take it: for there is no other save that here.” David said, “There is none like that; give it me.”

David had fled to Ahimelech. The only thing Ahimelech had done was, number one, given him some bread, and number two, given him the sword of Goliath, which really belonged to David anyhow, because David had conquered the giant. But Doeg was retained there. Look now in 1 Samuel chapter 22, and begin reading with verse 6.

Saul is feeling sorry for himself. He is bemoaning the fact that Jonathan, his son, had entered into a covenant with David. Of course, everything he is saying here is really untrue in one sense of the word, as you will see.

When Saul heard that David was discovered, and the men that were with him, Saul abode in Gibeah under a tree in Ramah, having his spear in his hand, and all his servants were standing about him. Then Saul said unto his servants that stood about him, “Hear now, ye Benjamites; will the son of Jesse give every one of you fields and vineyards, and make you all captains of thousands, and captains of hundreds?” In other words, he is saying, Do you think David is going to do anything for you that I am not going to do? And remember, I am your kin, David was not of the tribe of Benjamin. So he says, Do not think that David is going to help you.

Then he says, “That all of you have conspired against me, and there is none that showeth me that my son hath made a league with the son of Jesse.” He knew that Jonathan was protecting David. In fact, he cursed him for that. He even threw a spear, or a javelin, at Jonathan, trying to smite him, because he knew of that. He says, “There is none of you that is sorry for me, or showeth unto me that my son hath stirred up my servant against me, to lie in wait, as at this day.” Jonathan did not stir David up; Jonathan sent him away in safety. So that is a bald-faced lie, but Saul is making all this up so he can get some sympathy. Then answered Doeg the Edomite, which was set over the servants of Saul, and said, “I saw the son of

Jesse coming to Nob, to Ahimelech the son of Ahitub. And he inquired of the Lord for him—which is a lie—and gave him victuals, which is true, and gave him the sword of Goliath the Philistine, which is true.

Then the king sent to call Ahimelech the priest, the son of Ahitub, and all his father's house, the priests that were in Nob; and they came all of them to the king. Saul said, “Hear now, thou son of Ahitub.” And he answered, “Here am I, my lord.” Saul said unto him, “Why have ye conspired against me, thou and the son of Jesse, in that thou hast given him bread, and a sword, and hast inquired of God for him, that he should rise against me, to lie in wait, as at this day?”

Now watch what Ahimelech says: “Then Ahimelech answered the king, and said, And who is so faithful among all thy servants as David, which is the king's son in law, and goeth at thy bidding, and is honorable in thine house? Did I then begin to inquire of God for him? be it far from me: I didn't do that. Let not the king impute any thing unto his servant, nor to all the house of my father: for thy servant knew nothing of all this, less or more.” And that's the absolute truth.

The king said, “Thou shalt surely die, Ahimelech, thou, and all thy father's house.” He said unto the footmen that stood about him, “Turn, and slay the priests of the Lord; because their hand also is with David, and because they knew when he fled, and did not show it to me.” Number one, no one knew it but Ahimelech; and number two, Ahimelech did not even know he was fleeing.

But the servants of the king would not put forth their hand to fall upon the priests of the Lord. The king said unto Doeg, “Turn thou, and fall upon the priests.” Doeg the Edomite turned, and fell upon the priests, and slew on that day fourscore and five persons that did wear a linen ephod. So he murdered eighty-five priests. “And Nob, the city of the priests, smote he with the edge of the sword, both men and women, children and sucklings, and oxen, and asses, and sheep, with the edge of the sword.”

He not only murdered eighty-five priests; he then went in and murdered all the women, all the children, anyone that happened to

be visiting there. All were slain. Why? Because Doeg spoke partial truth to someone who did not deserve the truth. What Doeg did was a violation of the ninth commandment.

Of course, he added a lie. He said that Ahimelech inquired of God for David when Ahimelech did not do that at all. But Doeg spoke mostly the truth. The truth then was misused and abused and led to the deaths of many.

So, let me put it to you very clearly: You do not owe the truth to someone who is going to abuse the truth. When you tell the truth to someone who is going to abuse the truth, you become guilty of violating God's law as well. Obviously, some people are going to say, "Well, the best advice, the best counsel is always just tell the truth and let God work it out." Really?

God is not going to fulfill your responsibilities. God is not going to live your life for you. There was a godly king of Judah by the name of Jehoshaphat. Jehoshaphat entered into a league or a covenant with Ahab, king of Israel. Ahab was a reprobate. Jehoshaphat had been up to Samaria with Ahab. When he returned to his house in peace to Jerusalem, Jehu the son of Hanani the seer went out to meet him and said, "Shouldest thou help the ungodly, and love them that hate the Lord? therefore is wrath upon thee from before the Lord."

In other words, Jehu said, you brought judgment upon yourself because you have helped the ungodly. You have loved those that hate God; you have done for them what you should not have done. There is no way in the world that you can help the ungodly do that which is wicked and wrong.

I do not owe the truth to someone who is going to abuse and misuse the truth. If I am walking down the street and a man jumps out, throws a pistol in my face, and says, “Give me all your money,” I might reach into my pocket, pull out two one-dollar Federal Reserve notes, and hand them to him. If he asks, “Is that all you’ve got?” I will say, “Yes, that’s all I have in my pocket.” I am not going to say, “I cannot tell a lie. I have a thousand-dollar bill hidden in my left shoe.” If I told him the truth, what would I be doing? I would be aiding him and violating, “Thou shalt not steal.” I do not owe the truth to someone who is going to abuse the truth.

Here is another illustration. Gary comes running to me, really mad, and says, “Have you seen that stinking Marshall? I want to know where he lives. I’m going to blow his head off.” I look at Gary and say, “Now, Gary, the Marshall I know lives in such and such a place. Is that the one you’re talking about?” If Gary goes there and kills Marshall, what have I done? I have assisted him in violating the sixth commandment, “Thou shalt not kill.” I am going to say, “You’re too late. Marshall left for Canada last week.” I do not know where he is now, but I am not going to give a murderer the truth in order to help him murder someone.

Someone says, “Well, you’ve got to understand that sin is sin.” I understand that. But do you also realize that there are varying degrees of sin, with varying punishments according to the depth and wickedness of the sin? If I stole from James, I would not have to die. I could make restitution and give him back not only what I stole but also the percentage God requires—a twofold or fourfold restitution. God does not require me to die just because I stole. But if I murder Francis, what does God say? “My life is to be taken. Whosoever shedeth man’s blood, by man shall his blood be shed.”

Although stealing is a sin and murder is a sin, there are varying degrees and different punishments according to the sin. If I actually had to commit sin, I would much rather commit a lighter sin than a heavier sin. I am not going to help someone violate the law of God.

You do not owe the truth to someone who is going to abuse the truth. In Exodus chapter 1, beginning with verse 15, we read about the two midwives, Shiphrah and Puah.

Those are two names that we would not necessarily name our daughters, but these were very women and had some very good character. “And the king of Egypt spake to the Hebrew midwives, of which the name of the one was Shiphrah, and the name of the other Puah: And he said, When ye do the office of a midwife to the Hebrew women, and see them upon the stools; if it be a son, then ye shall kill him:” That is, you murder that baby. “But if it be a daughter, then she shall live.”

“But the midwives feared God, and did not as the king of Egypt commanded them, but saved the men children alive. And the king of

Egypt called for the midwives, and said unto them, Why have ye done this thing, and have saved the men children alive? And the midwives said unto Pharaoh, Because the Hebrew women are not as the Egyptian women; for they are lively, and are delivered ere the midwives come in unto them. Therefore God dealt well with the midwives: and the people multiplied, and waxed very mighty. And it came to pass, because the midwives feared God, that he made them houses," or literally, he made them homes.

Pharaoh tells these two women, "You murder every male child that is born." They did not obey. They allowed the male children to live. When Pharaoh saw that, he called and said, "What in the world is wrong with you? Why haven't you obeyed my commandment?" They said, "You don't understand. The Hebrew women are not like the Egyptian women. They're alive, lively, and the child is born before we ever get there." You mean to tell me that out of all the women in Israel, not one ever needed help delivering a child? You know what these two women did?

They lied to the king. You are not going to give the truth to someone who is going to abuse the truth.

In Joshua chapter 2, beginning with verse 2, "And it was told the king of Jericho, saying, Behold, there came men in hither to night of the children of Israel to search out the country. And the king of Jericho sent unto Rahab, saying, Bring forth the men that are come to thee, which are entered into thine house: for they be come to search out all the country. And the woman took the two men, and hid them, and said thus, There came men unto me, but I wist not whence they were: And it came to pass about the time of shutting of the gate, when it was dark, that the men went out: whither the men went I wot not: pursue after them quickly; for ye shall overtake them."

But she had brought them up to the roof of the house, and hid them with the stalks of flax, which she had laid in order upon the roof. And the men pursued after them the way to Jordan unto the fords: and as soon as they which pursued after them were gone out, they shut the gate. And before they were laid down, she came up unto them upon the roof; "And she said unto the men," and of course you know the rest of the story, how she let them down over the wall

with a scarlet rope. She told them to hide themselves three days in the wilderness until the pursuers came back.

Now, the king said, “Give me the two men that came unto you.” “I don't know who they were. They came and they left. They went that way. If you will hurry, you will probably catch them.” All the time, she was hiding them on the roof. Of course, you know how they entered into a covenant with Rahab to spare her, her family, and her household.

If Rahab had told the truth to the king, it would have resulted not only in the deaths of those two Hebrew spies, but also in her death and the death of her family. So here the principle is once again: you do not owe the truth to someone who is going to abuse the truth. That does not necessarily mean that you have to outright lie, but it does mean that you do not give them the truth.

Turn in your Bibles to 1 Kings chapter 22. Have you ever wondered how God got Ahab up to Ramoth Gilead in order to have him killed? You remember that Jehoshaphat, the one we read about earlier who was rebuked, went to Ahab. Ahab was trying to convince him to go to war so that Israel, the northern kingdom, could recover Ramoth Gilead. Jehoshaphat made a horrible mistake. He said to Ahab, "I am as thou art, my people as thy people, my horses as thy horses." Jehoshaphat was a godly man. He was not anywhere near like Ahab, nor were the people in the southern kingdom anywhere like the people in the northern kingdom.

Nevertheless, they went, and all of Ahab's false prophets came out and began to prophesy, saying, "Go up, O king, and prosper: go up, O king, and prosper." Finally Jehoshaphat asked, "Is there not here a prophet of the Lord, that we might inquire of him?" Ahab said, "There is one, but he hates me. He never says anything good about me." Jehoshaphat said, "Let not the king say so." So they sent and got Micaiah out of prison, where Ahab had him. When he came out, he told Ahab exactly what was happening.

Look in 1 Kings chapter 22, beginning with verse 19: "And he said, Hear thou therefore the word of the Lord: I saw the Lord sitting on his throne, and all the host of heaven standing by him on his right hand and on his left. And the Lord said, Who shall persuade Ahab,

that he may go up and fall at Ramoth Gilead? And one said on this manner, and another said on that manner. And there came forth a spirit, and stood before the Lord, and said, I will persuade him. And the Lord said unto him, Wherewith? And he said, I will go forth, and I will be a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets. And he said, Thou shalt persuade him, and prevail also: go forth, and do so."

See how deceived Ahab was. Look in verse 23. Here is what Micaiah tells him.

“Now therefore, behold, the Lord hath put a lying spirit in the mouth of all these thy prophets, and the Lord hath spoken evil concerning thee.” What did God use to get Ahab to Ramoth Gilead? A lying spirit. When Micaiah said, “Your prophets are lying,” Ahab did not believe him. When Ahab got to Ramoth Gilead, he disguised himself and went into battle. The Bible says a certain man drew a bow at a venture; he simply let the arrow go, and it hit Ahab between the joints of the harness, and he died. How did God get him there? He used a lying spirit.

Now, I want to show you another example that presents, to me, the clearest principle: you do not owe the truth to someone who is going to abuse the truth. Turn back in your Bibles to 1 Samuel chapter 15, beginning with verse 28.

King Saul had been rejected by God. Saul was sent to slay the Amalekites, but he spared Agag the king, along with the best of the sheep and the best of the oxen. He disobeyed God, and God rejected him. In 1 Samuel 15:28, Samuel said unto him, “The Lord hath rent the kingdom of Israel from thee this day, and hath given it to a neighbor of thine, that is better than thou. And also the Strength of Israel will not lie nor repent: for he is not a man, that he should repent.” In other words, Saul was told, “It’s over for you. That’s all there is to it. God’s not gonna change his mind. You have been rejected. You’ve disobeyed God, you rebelled against God, and God’s rejecting you.”

Now look in chapter 16, beginning with verse 1: “And the Lord said unto Samuel, How long wilt thou mourn for Saul, seeing I have rejected him from reigning over Israel? fill thine horn with oil, and go, I will

Samuel is still mourning over Saul, and God asked him, “How long you gonna mourn? I've rejected him. That's it. It's over with. You fill your horn with oil. I want to send you to Bethlehem. I've chosen Saul's replacement. You anoint him to be the new king.” Samuel asked, “How can I go? If Saul hear it, he will kill me.” Here is a tyrant. He is not going to take a replacement.

And note what God said: “Take an heifer with thee, and say, I am come to sacrifice to the Lord. And call Jesse to the sacrifice, and I will show thee what thou shalt do: and thou shalt anoint unto me him whom I name unto thee.” What did God ask Samuel to do? Go and anoint David. Samuel asked, “How can I do that? If Saul hears, he'll kill me.”

God said, “You go and offer a sacrifice. That's your cover. And you say, ‘I've come to do sacrifice.’” Did he do a sacrifice? Was that the purpose of his mission? No. The purpose of his mission was to anoint David to be king in Saul's place. Could not God have controlled Saul? He could have. But God used deception to keep Saul from knowing what Samuel was going to be doing.

Clarification: When Truth Is Owed

So the principle is still plain: You do not owe the truth to someone who's going to abuse and misuse the truth. But these illustrations and this principle do not mean that you can evade the truth to those to whom you owe the truth. You cannot use something like this to say, “Well, I'm just not going to tell you the truth.” Children owe the truth to their parents. If you owe the truth, you're to tell the truth. A member of a church owes the truth to the pastor. An employee owes the truth to his employer. Unless there is some tyranny or some danger, you can't say, “Well, I'm just not going to tell you the truth.” No, you are to be a truth teller. You are to always tell the truth. But what God is not demanding is that truth be revealed to someone's detriment and someone's

Penalty for Perjury and Talebearing

God's destruction of false witnesses would lead to a further violation of God's law. In Deuteronomy 19, God deals with perjury: “If a false witness rise up against any man to testify against him that which is

wrong; Then both the men, between whom the controversy is, shall stand before the Lord, before the priests and the judges, which shall be in those days; And the judges shall make diligent inquisition: and, behold, if the witness be a false witness, and hath testified falsely against his brother; Then shall ye do unto him, as he had thought to have done unto his brother: so shalt thou put the evil away from among you. And those which remain shall hear, and fear, and shall henceforth commit no more any such evil among you."

If I falsely testify against Steve, God says that when I am discovered and have perjured myself, whatever I wanted done to him is to be done to me—whether loss of property, loss of life, or whatever it is. Once again, it would be a violation of the ninth commandment: "Thou shalt not bear false witness." The ninth commandment therefore forbids not only all unjust censure, slander, backbiting, scorning, false accusations, and the like, but also requires that we have a candid and just judgment of our neighbor. We are to speak well of him and are not to bear false witness against him.

Leviticus 19:16 says, "Thou shalt not go up and down as a talebearer among thy people: neither shalt thou stand against the blood of thy neighbour: I am the Lord." A lot of people love to gossip. They love to slander, repeat, and hear innuendos. There are things that do not need to be repeated, even if they are true. If it is no one's business, why tell? If it is not going to help, why tell? God says, "Thou shalt not go up and down as a talebearer among thy people."

Calvin, on this verse, says, "God here makes a provision for every man's character and good name, lest any should be undeservedly weighed down by calumnies and false accusations." Many men have had their ministries, lives, and families ruined by false accusations.

The Positive Side: Being Truth-Tellers Like Christ

Our Lord quotes the ninth commandment in Matthew 19, Mark 10, and Luke chapter 18. What is the positive side of the ninth commandment? If we are not to bear false witness, that means that we are to be tellers of the truth. I believe the implied promise involved in this: if we become a teller of the truth, we are going to ultimately be more likened to our Lord.

Ephesians 4:25 says, "Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour: for we are members one of another." Colossians 3:9 says, "Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds."

When we look at Ephesians 4:25, we are told, "Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour: for we are members one of another." In other words, we are in the same body and the same family. Do I owe my father and mother truth? Yes. Do I owe my brother and sister truth? Yes. This is what God is saying: we are to tell the truth to each other. Truth is not merely a private matter; it governs how we relate to those with whom God has joined us.

But when we look at Colossians 3:9, he says, "Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds." The old man is the old corrupt way of living and doing things. If we turn back in our Bibles to Romans chapter 6, we can look at what the Bible says concerning the old man. Romans chapter 6 begins there with verse 1. Paul asks this question in Romans 6:1: "What shall we say then?"

“Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein? Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection: Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin.” Our old man has been crucified, so we cannot lie to each other because we have put off that old man.

The implied promise in the ninth commandment is that when we refuse to bear false witness and become tellers of the truth, we become individuals who are loving, kind, helpful, and beneficial to our neighbors. We become like our Lord. The Lord Jesus Christ in Revelation 3 and verse 14 is called the faithful and true witness. Proverbs 14 and verse 5 says, “A faithful witness will not lie: but a

false witness will utter lies." If we become tellers of the truth, we become a faithful and true witness.

Matthew Henry said, "The ninth commandment concerns our own and our neighbor's good name. Thou shalt not bear false witness." It covers three things: speaking falsely in any manner, lying, equivocating, and devising and designing to deceive our neighbor; speaking unjustly against our neighbor to the prejudice of his reputation; and bearing false witness against him, laying to his charge things that he knows not.

Occasionally I receive a phone call from someone in a different state: "Brother Weaver, do you believe such and such?" I answer, "Why no. Where did you ever come up with that?" They say, "So-and-so is saying that this is what you believe." I ask, "Who is so-and-so? I've never heard of him in my life, never spoken to him in my life." Yet someone is telling everybody what I believe without even knowing what I believe.

This is a violation of the ninth commandment. It is a bearing of false witness. Someone told people that I had to write him a long letter because he had said horrible untruths about me and another pastor. I pointed out to him, "You, sir, are insane. You have violated so many scriptures, it is unreal." I had never spoken to him or even seen the man. Yet he set himself up as an expert on who I am and what I believe. He had never heard one message. It is indeed a violation of the ninth commandment.

Warnings and Applications

Let me give you a little warning. You and I both need to be very careful. If you become a teller of the truth—and I know that most of you are—I understand that. I have tried to make it a principle in my life not to lie, but to be a teller of the truth. The problem is that once you understand you do not lie, have no need to lie, and do not want to lie, there is a tendency to receive what everyone else says at face value. You think they are telling the truth as well, when the truth of the matter is that most people are not telling the truth. Therefore, you have to be very careful about what you hear and receive as truth. I have known people who would lie when telling the truth was much easier. Some people seemingly cannot even live unless they are lying

about something or someone. You must be cautious when you become a truth teller and assume that everyone else does the same, which in reality is not true.

Many wrong impressions are made and personal feelings created, hindering confidence in people by statements that are not true. Oftentimes we repeat things that we have not verified, things that are untrue, and things that are unnecessary. Something could be true, but why would you repeat it if there is no necessity? That is what it meant, "Thou shalt not go up and down as a talebearer among thy people." Whether it is true or not is immaterial. I have always used the illustration that if you hit a skunk in the road with your car, that is bad. But if you wait until it is a hundred degrees and seven or eight other cars have hit him, then it is really bad. That is the way it is with repeating things.

It just gets worse and worse. If you cannot be part of the solution, do not be part of the problem. Often, it is wise simply to keep our mouths shut.

I never will forget one time Alice and I were returning from a trip through Norman Park, Georgia. On the right side of the road stood a fine, beautiful old brick home. Out in front was a little toy poodle with bows in her ears, a diamond necklace, and red-painted toenails. I knew she was some woman's little darling. I told Alice, "Look," and there she was beside the road, wallowing in a dead skunk. I said, "I cannot wait until Mama lets her back in the house."

That is what it is like when we start repeating things that we should not even repeat. We are carrying a scent that should not be carried.

There is another application. The Bible says in Ephesians 4:15, "Speaking the truth in love." Many times we speak the truth angrily, or with an attitude that is hateful, cutting, or sarcastic. God says, "No, if you speak the truth, speak the truth in love." Be as nice as you can, but tell the truth if you owe that individual the truth.

Charles Haddon Spurgeon said, "An unbridled tongue is the vehiculum Diaboli, the chariot of the devil, wherein he rides in triumph." Then he quotes another author, Greenhorn, who describes the tongue by contraries or diversities: "It is a little piece of flesh,

small in quantity, but mighty in quality. It is soft, but slippery. It goeth lightly, but falleth heavily. It striketh soft, but woundeth sore. It goeth out quickly, but burneth vehemently. It pierceth deeply, and therefore not healed speedily. It hath liberty granted easily to go forth, but it will find no means easily to return home. And being once inflamed with Satan's bellows, it is like the fire of hell." If you read James chapter 3, that is exactly what James says about it.

We must learn to speak the truth in love and try to build people up. Yet we need to learn to pray as David did in Psalm 141 and verse 3: "Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth; keep the door of my lips." Certainly, we should do that.

Conclusion: Law and Gospel in Harmony

The Law and the Gospel go hand in hand. They are not antithetical—that is, they are not against each other; they are complementary. Even the great Apostle Paul, when speaking on justification by faith alone, said in Romans chapter 3, verse 31, "Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law." Any gospel, so-called, that destroys the law of God is not the gospel of grace. It is not the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, because justification by faith alone establishes the law.

Stephen Charnock, in his book The Existence and the Attributes of God, labeled this "an incentive for obedience": "The commands of the gospel require the obedience of the creature. There is not one precept in the gospel which interferes with any rule in the law, but strengthens it and represents it in its true exactness. The heat to scorch us is allayed, but the light to direct us is not extinguished. Not the least allowance to any sin is granted, nor the least affection to any sin indulged. The law is tempered by the gospel, but not nullified and cast out of doors by it, in an act that none but those that are sanctified shall be glorified.

There must be grace here if we expect glory hereafter; we must not presume to expect admittance to the vision of God's face unless our souls be clothed with the robe of holiness. The law requires obedience in our intention and purpose and an endeavor to observe it in our actions. It promotes the honor of God, ordains universal charity among men, reveals the whole counsel of God, and furnishes

men with the holiest of laws. There is no conflict between the law and the gospel. When God says, "Thou shalt not bear false witness," the positive is, "Thou shalt be a teller of the truth." As we become tellers of the truth, we become more like our Lord Jesus Christ, who is the faithful and true witness and speaks the truth in love.

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we bow before thee. We thank you for your love, grace, mercy, law, gospel, and the power of the Holy Spirit. Enlighten our eyes, make us holy and godly, make us tellers of the truth, and help us to be like the Lord Jesus Christ, a faithful and true witness. In thy name we ask and pray. Amen.

CHAPTER 20

Promises of The Law

Part 20

Introduction to the Tenth Commandment

“Neither shalt thou covet thy neighbor's house, his field, or his manservant, or his maidservant, or his ox, or his ass, or anything that is thy neighbor's.” Covetousness is a sin that most Christians never really consider. Since we do not consider it, we do not understand it, and consequently we engage in it quite often. We tend to think that covetousness is normal and natural. It is normal and natural for those who are unconverted, for those who have never known the grace and mercy of God. But the child of God wants to live in obedience and holiness and please his Heavenly Father.

As you can see from Deuteronomy 5:21, covetousness is exceedingly broad. It speaks of your neighbor's wife, house, field, manservant, maidservant, ox, ass, or anything that is your neighbor's. If you look back to Exodus 20:17, you will see the same Tenth Commandment, worded just a little differently: “Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's

wife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor anything that is thy neighbor's."

When you compare these two scriptures, you can readily see that covetousness is a strong desire to have something that belongs to someone else. It is not that you desire to have one like it; you want the one your neighbor has. This is where you get into covetousness. Covetousness, then, extends to many things.

Hebrew and Greek Words for Covetousness

The husbands, wives, children, land, houses, buildings, it doesn't matter. So what I want to do at the beginning is I want to give you a quick overview of the Hebrew and the Greek words that are used to teach about covetousness, so I hope it will enlarge our understanding. So if you look back in the book of Exodus chapter 20 and verse 17, He says it like this, "Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's house." Now the word covet here is the Hebrew word chamad, and it literally means to desire, to covet, to delight in, to lust after, and it talks about delectable things. In other words, you're finding pleasure in someone or in something that does not belong to you. So when you look in Deuteronomy 5 and verse 21 the word desire there when he says, "Neither shalt thou desire thy neighbor's wife." The word desire is the same Hebrew word as covet in Exodus chapter 20 and verse 17. However, the word covet in verse 21 of Deuteronomy 5 is a different word. It is the word avah, which means to desire, to lust, to long after, and to covet.

In other words, it is something then that indicates that one is craving, really desiring, and really wanting something that does not belong to them. Those are the two main Hebrew words. But I want you to turn in your Bibles if you would to Luke chapter 16 and 2 Timothy chapter 3 and verse 2. So if you look in Luke chapter 16 first and then we'll go to 2 Timothy chapter 2 or chapter 3 it is. Luke chapter 16 and verse 14. Luke 16 and verse 14.

And notice if you would what is being said here. In fact I will come back to this verse just momentarily. Notice if you would Luke chapter 16 and verse 14. The Bible says, "And the Pharisees also who were covetous heard all these things and they derided him." Note if you would please the Pharisees also who were covetous heard all

these things, and they derided him. Then if you will look in 2 Timothy chapter 3 and verse 2, there the Bible says, "For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy."

The reason I read those two verses together is because the word covetous there is the same identical Greek word. It is actually the word philarguros, and it is translated covetous these two times. It is the word from which we get our word avarice, which means a love of money. Basically speaking, it is made up of two Greek words: philos, which means love, and arguros, which is silver. So it is a love or a lust for silver, or a love or lust for money. It means to love money or to love silver in such a way that you are greedy and vain, and you are willing to do whatever is necessary to acquire it.

Now, there is another Greek word. Look in 1 Corinthians chapter 5, beginning with verse 9. He says, "I wrote an epistle not to company with fornicators, yet not altogether with fornicators of this world, or with the covetous, or extortioners, or with idolaters, for then must you needs go out of the world." Pleonektes is the Greek word. It is another word used to express this particular sin.

Look in 2 Peter 2 and verse 14: "Having eyes full of adultery that cannot cease from sin; beguiling unstable souls; a heart they have exercised with covetous practices, cursed children." You have basically the same word. This word actually occurs four times in the New Testament, and it refers to someone who is really eager to have more, especially that which belongs to others. So it refers to individuals who happen to be greedy of gain in various forms.

Now, when we talk about a negative, 1 Timothy chapter 3 and verse 3 lays down qualifications for a pastor, a bishop, or an elder, whatever you want to call him. One of the qualifications is that he is not to be greedy of filthy lucre, but patient, not a brawler, not covetous. The word covetous is a negative word.

You remember I told you earlier that this word philarguros is made up of two Greek words: philos, love, and arguros, silver. This one is aphilarguros. When you put an A, or an alpha, in front of a word, it negates that word; it makes it negative. Therefore, what he is saying is that the pastor is not to be someone who is a lover of

money, someone who is not to be a lover of silver. In other words, he is not to be what we would call an avaricious man. His life is not to be one that is greedy of gain. He is not to be someone who is just striving to get anything and everything that he can probably get.

Even when it talks about deacons in verse 8, in that passage it says, “not greedy of filthy lucre,” basically the same. But there is another word I want you to see. Turn to Acts chapter 20 and look at verse 33. I want you to see how broad this is and how interconnected sins really are. Paul has from Miletus; he is sent to Ephesus, and he has called the elders of the church and is speaking to them. He says to them, “I have coveted no man's silver or gold or apparel.” The word coveted here is actually the Greek word epithumeo. Literally, what he is saying is, “I have not lusted after any man's silver or gold or apparel.”

The point I am trying to make is this: your lust is whatever you set your passion upon. Epithumeo: epi is a preposition which means upon, and thumos is the noun which means passion. Whatever you set your passion upon, that is your lust.

Lusting and covetousness go hand in hand. Paul said, “I have coveted no man's silver or gold or apparel. I have lusted after no man's silver or gold or apparel.” So obviously, when we lust, when we're desiring that which is not ours, it turns into covetousness, which we're going to see is indeed a very serious sin. You must remember that any sin is serious enough to bring you into judgment.

Turn back to 1 Corinthians 6—or turn over, I should say. We were in 1 Corinthians 6 earlier, or chapter 5, I guess it was. Look in chapter 6, beginning with verse 9, as we consider the seriousness of the sin of covetousness. The Apostle makes this statement: “Know you not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the Kingdom of God.” This is something you should know: the unrighteous are not going to inherit the Kingdom of God.

The Seriousness of Covetousness

Then he says, “Be not deceived.” If you think in some way that the unrighteous are going to inherit the Kingdom of God, he says you are deceived. “Be not deceived, neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor

adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God."

Notice that the covetous individual, the man who is consumed with covetousness, is linked with the man who is consumed with drunkenness, the one consumed with adultery, idolatry, sodomy, and all of these things. If your life is eaten up with covetousness, then obviously you're not converted at all, and you're deceived if you think you are.

Now look at verse 11, because he goes on to say, "And such were," that's past tense, "and such were some of you. But you're washed but you're sanctified but you're justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God." Obviously, the Apostle is telling us that covetousness is indeed a very grievous sin. Turn over to the book of Ephesians, chapter 5, and look at verse 5. Just in case you did not understand 1 Corinthians chapter 6, he makes it even easier to understand in Ephesians 5 and verse 5. Look what he says: "For this you know," and you have to have this understanding.

"For this you know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God." Covetousness is idolatry. It would be painful enough, I would think, for a covetous person to be grouped together with the Pharisees, who were notorious haters of Jesus Christ. You remember Luke 16:14: "And the Pharisees, who also were covetous, heard all these things and they derided Him." The Pharisees hated Jesus Christ, mocked Jesus Christ, and derided Jesus Christ. And they were covetous. So, a covetous man is grouped and linked together with the Pharisees.

Covetousness as a Lifestyle and Addiction

Covetousness actually becomes a lifestyle. It becomes a habit and a practice that will consume you. In 2 Peter 2:12, we read, "But these as natural brute beasts, made to be taken and destroyed, speak evil of the things that they understand not, and shall utterly perish in their own corruption, and shall receive the reward of unrighteousness, as they that count it pleasure to riot in the daytime." Verse 13 continues, "Spots they are and blemishes,

sporting themselves with their own deceivings while they feast with you."

Now look at verse 14: "Having eyes full of adultery and that cannot cease from sin beguiling unstable souls and heart they have exercised with covetous practices cursed children." He says, "Having eyes full of adultery," and then says that it cannot cease from sin. In other words, it is impossible for them to stop sinning. May I remind you of Matthew 5, where our Lord said, "...whosoever looketh upon a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart."

He says, "Having eyes full of adultery that cannot cease from sin." Then He adds, "...beguiling unstable souls." That is someone who has no understanding, no foundation, no stability, or is easily beguiled. Then he makes this statement: "A heart they have exercised with covetous practices. Cursed children." The interesting thing is the word exercised. "A heart they have exercised with covetous practices." The word exercise is from the Greek word gumnazo. It is where we get our English word gymnasium or gymnastics. Someone sent me recently a little video of one young woman who was a gymnast.

Watching her would make your mouth fall open. She was standing still, then did a back flip, hit the floor, did a front flip all the way down to the end of the building, and twirled her body sideways in the air before she hit the floor. Then she came back the same way, doing those flips. When she got back where she started, she turned her body sideways in the air and hit on both feet. You think, “Wow, how can anybody do anything like that?”

Well, she did not start yesterday doing that. She practiced; she worked at it. She gymnasticized herself so that she could reach that level. That is exactly what God is saying here: these people have gymnasticized their hearts with covetous practices. That is why He said their eyes are full of adultery and cannot cease from sin. They have exercised their hearts and their eyes to the point that all the sin, rebellion, wickedness, and disobedience are normal and natural for them.

They do it without thinking. They are addicted to it. They cannot stop it. It is like pornography. The word pornography: porne is the Greek word for fornication, and graphe is the Greek word for writing. Pornography is just fornication writing; that is all it is. There are people who have gotten hooked on pornography. They cannot stop, and once they cannot stop, it gets worse and worse and becomes more and more gross, because now it takes something more perverted to excite and stimulate them. They are absolutely destroyed. Obviously, they have exercised, or gymnasticized, themselves under that wickedness.

The Love of Money and Its Consequences

Now, talking about, "Thou shalt not covet," there is a dire warning given to us by our Lord in 1 Timothy chapter 6. Notice verse 10: "For the love of money is the root of all evil, which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows." The word coveted in this passage is a different Greek word, oregomai. The word actually means to covet after and to desire.

However, it is a stronger word, and it literally means to stretch oneself out to the nth degree in order to grasp something, to take hold of it, to reach after it. I got tickled at myself this morning because I had some feed buckets in the cow pen and did not want to get in. I was reaching through the fence, trying to reach that feed bucket, stretching to the nth degree. I could just barely touch it, and I thought to myself, How silly. Let me just turn around, pick up this stick, and bring the bucket to me. But that is exactly what this word means. It means that you have stretched yourself out to the exact limit. You are so covetous that you want this more than anything else. Now, there are several truths plainly given to us right here.

The first one is this: It is not money that is the root of all evil; it is the love of money. Everybody needs money. Everybody wants money. Everyone desires money. I tell people, I have to pay for my groceries exactly the way you have to pay for your groceries. Do not walk into the store and say, "Oh, you are the pastor. We are just going to give it all to you." It does not work like that. I have to buy tires the way you have to buy tires.

But the difference is this: There is an understanding that you need money, and there is an understanding that you must use money. That is quite different from stretching yourself out for it, trying to get it every breath that you breathe and every time your eyebrow or your eyelids bat. You are consumed with it. What First Timothy chapter 6 and verse 10 is actually doing is telling us that we are not to be consumed with this thing. It is the love of money that will indeed destroy us.

But note what else he said. Look in verse 10: “Which some have coveted after and they have erred from the faith.” Once you begin to covet in this way, stretching yourself out for every little bit that you can get, inevitably you are going to err from the faith. Why? Because if you want it that badly, you are going to lie, steal, cheat, defraud, and do whatever is necessary to get it. But look at this: He says in verse 10, not only have you erred from the faith, you have pierced themselves through with many sorrows. The Greek word for pierce here literally means to pierce through and, metaphorically speaking, means to torture one’s soul with sorrows.

It is like taking a sharp arrow or a sharp knife and jabbing yourself over and over with it. That is what you are doing to your spirit and to your soul. He says that the love of money is the root of all evil. When you have this inordinate love, obviously you are going to err from the faith, and you are going to pierce yourself through with many sorrows. Here is the materialistic age expounded, showing the result of it.

Warnings Against Covetousness

Now go back in your Bibles to Luke chapter 12, because I want you to see the warning our Lord gives us. In Luke 12:15, He says, “And he said unto them, Take heed and beware of covetousness; for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of things which he possesseth.” Isn't that amazing? He says, Take heed—in other words, you had better pay attention—and beware of covetousness. Why? Because a man's life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses. This verse is absolutely and totally contradictory to the materialistic age in which we live.

Everybody wants a bigger house, bigger cars, more televisions—anything that can be obtained. The philosophy is, “Get all you can and get all you can get.” We have all seen the bumper stickers. One said, “He who dies with the most toys wins,” which is ridiculous. I saw another on a lady's car that simply said, “She who dies with the most material wins.” She was a seamstress. Well, that is the difference, I guess, between men and women. But our Lord is saying, Look, the truth is this: whatever you possess, I do not care how great, valuable, or beautiful it is, you are going to die and leave it. You are not taking it with you. It is just that simple.

We must understand something else about covetousness. Turn in your Bibles to 2 Peter 2, because covetousness drives some men to make merchandise out of others. “But there were false prophets also among the people, Even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, Even denying the Lord that brought them bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction.”

“And many shall follow their pernicious or wicked ways by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of and through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you whose judgment now of a long time lingers not and their damnation slumbers not.”

Note, if you would, who through covetousness and with feigned words shall make merchandise of you. He is talking about false prophets and false teachers—people who are willing to do whatever is necessary, and destroy whomever is necessary to destroy, in order to acquire more for themselves.

I did not get to read the article, or at least not all of it. I did glance at it. Just yesterday, I looked at an article where a journalist was interviewing a man, I suppose, who was a sex trafficker. He was trafficking young girls. He was asked, “Could he sell all the young girls?” “No, not all.” “Well, what do you do with those that you cannot sell since you have them?” “I kill them.” He confessed to murdering from four to five hundred girls.

You are talking about making merchandise. It is not only true in the secular world; it is also true in what you and I would call the

religious world. Through feigned, hypocritical, purposeful deceit and lies, they make merchandise of people. They get what they can from them. Whether they destroy them is immaterial; they just take what they can take.

Now, if you will turn back in your Bibles to the book of Ephesians, chapter 5, I want to show you how serious covetousness really is. Ephesians 5 and verse 3 says, “But fornication and all uncleanness or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints.” He puts fornication, uncleanness, and covetousness together, and says, “Let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints.” Turn over to Colossians, chapter 3, and look at verse 5: “Mortify”

“Therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry.” It is interesting that again he says covetousness is idolatry. It is also interesting that he said, “Let this not be once named among you, as becometh saints.”

Go back in your Bibles to 1 Corinthians chapter 5. There are many Christians who say, “I am not going to buy from that company because they support transgenderism or sodomy.” I understand that, and I have no problem with it. The truth is, I probably would not buy from them either. But there are so many companies that support everything you and I stand against that it is impossible not to do business with some of them.

Look at what the apostle Paul said in 1 Corinthians 5: “I wrote unto you in an epistle not to accompany with fornicators: Yet not altogether with the fornicators of this world, or with the covetous, or extortioners, or with idolaters; for then must ye needs go out of the world.” If I try to find a man or company with which to do business that is not involved in covetousness, extortion, or fornication, Paul says I must go out of the world, because everybody is a sinner.

But look at what he says in verse 11: “But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one no not to eat.” Paul says that if you

are going to boycott anybody, boycott a professing believer who does these things, because he should know better.

I am simply pointing out the fact that covetousness is everywhere you turn in the world. If God condemns covetousness and forbids it, which He does, how is that to affect our lives?

The Positive Side of the Tenth Commandment

If covetousness is not to be once named among the saints, how then are we to live? If we cease from the sin of covetousness, what will we become? We have considered the negative side of the Tenth Commandment, "Thou shalt not covet." Now I want to deal with the positive, with the implied promise of the Tenth Commandment. The positive and the implied promise are basically one and the same: if you learn to live without covetousness, you will not only be obeying the positive side of the Tenth Commandment, you will also be developing a biblical contentment.

The Positive Promise: Contentment

Paul says, "But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain that we can carry nothing out. And having food and raiment, let us be therewith content." He continues, "But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and to many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition."

Notice what he said: "But godliness with contentment is great gain." Contentment is a state of mind; it refers to a calm and satisfied understanding that delivers us from a spirit of murmuring and complaining. Godliness with contentment enables us to acquiesce, or bow, to God's allotment in our lives. True godliness will always be contented, regardless of one's state or predicament. Godliness will always rejoice in its portion, whether it be a little or a lot.

The Apostle Paul had something to say on this. In Philippians chapter 4, verse 11, he said, "Not that I speak in respect of want, for I have learned in whatsoever state I am therewith to be content."

It requires very little of this world's goods to satisfy a man who believes himself to be a citizen of another country. Paul had learned whatever state he was in, therewith to be content. He continued, "I know both how to be abased and I know how to abound. Everywhere and in all things I'm instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me."

He had learned how to abound, and he had also learned how to be abased. He had learned how to be full, and he had also learned how to be hungry. He had learned to have plenty and to suffer need.

The truth of the matter is that, usually in our lives, as one man says, it is always usually feast or famine. You either have plenty or you do not have plenty. Usually, when you think you have plenty, sudden you get more bills than you ever had before in your life, or things tear up. In other words, something is going to destroy that plenty.

Now notice what the Apostle Paul said: "Not that I speak in respect of want, for I have learned in whatsoever state I am therewith to be content." Contentment is a learning experience. He said, "I have actually learned it." Adam Clark said it like this: "I am so satisfied with the wise providence and goodness of God that I know whatever he determines is the best and therefore I am perfectly contented that he should govern the world in the way which seems best to his godly wisdom. A contented mind is a continual feast."

What do we get by murmuring and complaining? Biblical contentment means this: Lord, you're wise, and in your providence, you send me what I need. You send me things when I need to abound. You take those things when I need to be abased. When I need to be hungry, you allow that; when I need to be full, you allow that. God is sovereign, and God is on the throne.

I remember reading years ago an incident in the life of Martin Luther the Reformer. Philip Melanchthon worked with Luther and, in fact, took over after Luther died. Luther was sitting at his desk reading and studying, and things were not going well for the Reformation. There was persecution and trouble arising on about

every hand. Philip Melanchthon was walking back and forth in the room, wringing his hands and saying, “Oh, Luther, Luther, what shall we do?”

“This is happening here, this is happening there. Oh, Luther, Luther, what shall we do?” Finally, Martin Luther looked up from his desk and said, “Let Philip Melanchthon cease to rule the world, and all shall be well.” And that is true. When we look at the situation in this country, the only thing we can say is that God has everything under control, and everything is going wrong just right.

Living Without Covetousness

Now, the positive side of the tenth commandment, “Thou shalt not covet,” is that we are to be contented and satisfied. Hebrews 13:5 says, “Let your conversation be without covetousness, and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.” When it says, “Let your conversation be without covetousness,” it is not speaking merely of words—of Effie and me talking about wanting a new Maserati or BMW. The word conversation does involve words, but here it means your lifestyle, your life, your deportment, how you live, and your walk. Everything about you is to be without covetousness. The Greek word tropos means a manner, a way, a fashion of life, one’s character, and one’s deportment. Godliness, then, will enable us to walk without covetousness.

When Hebrews says, “Be content with such things as you have,” that does not mean you cannot plan, work, or set a goal to achieve sometime within the next three months or the next year. It means that whenever we have fulfilled all our responsibilities and obligations and have done everything we possibly can do, we stop, rest, and leave it in His hands. Let Him work it out. Whatever He works out, and however He works it out, will be fine with us.

“Let your conversation”—your life—“be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have.” Here is why you can be content with a little or a lot: He has said, “I will never leave thee, nor will I forsake thee.” In other words, it does not matter whether you are feasting or experiencing famine. He is there, He will take care of

us, and He will never leave or forsake us. Therefore, we can be content in whatever state we find ourselves.

Every time I read Hebrews 13:5, I think of an incident that happened sometime back. Alice came to me and said, “I need some new dresses. I have nothing to wear.” She has an old closet full of nothing to wear. I told her, “Well, we’re Christians. We need to go by the Scripture, don’t we?” She said, “Of course.” I opened my Bible to Hebrews 13:5 and read, “Be content with such things as you have.” She was content for about two minutes, and even more content after she got her new dresses.

It doesn't mean that you can't strive, plan, work, or acquire. But if she had been unable to purchase those dresses, she would have had to be content with what she had. Do you understand that contentment is the opposite of covetousness? If I am content, then I'm not going to covet. Why would I desire anything else if I was really content? If I'm contented with my wife, why would I desire another man's wife? If I'm contented with my automobile, why would I desire anybody else's automobile? If I'm contented with my clothes, why would I desire someone else's clothes? Contentment is absolutely the opposite of covetousness.

The promise is that, if we learn to live without covetousness, we learn to live with contentment and satisfaction. The apostle said that godliness with contentment is great gain. He didn't say godliness with a lot of houses, property, silver, and gold is great gain. No. Godliness with contentment is great gain.

Seeking God's Kingdom First

Look in your Bibles to Matthew chapter 6, beginning with verse 25, and notice how our Lord tells us once again that we are not to be covetous, and why: “Therefore I say unto you, take no thought for your life, what you shall eat, Or what you shall drink, nor yet for your body, what you shall put on, is not life more than meat, and the body than raiment.”

Notice the illustration: “Behold the fowls of the air, for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather in the barns.” We do all that, but they don't. “Yet your heavenly Father feedeth them.” “Are you

not much better than they? Which of you, by taking thought, can add one cubit into his stature? And why take you thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow, they toil not, neither do they spin. And yet I say unto you that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Wherefore, here's what you should understand, if God so clothed the grass of the field which today is, and tomorrow's cast in the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith? 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, or the unsaved, 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. All the food we need, all the raiment we need, and everything else we need, if we seek Him first, will be added unto us.

This is why He said He will never leave us nor forsake us. Therefore, we can be content with whatever we have. The truth of the matter is this: we waste our breath, our energy, and our time seeking things that are going to be left behind when we die. I remember reading about an exceedingly rich man who died. As the pallbearers carried his casket to the burying place, one looked at the other and whispered, "How much did he leave?" The other responded, "He left it all." That is a fact. No matter how wealthy we are, we will lose it all and leave it all.

Now, another Scripture: 2 Corinthians chapter 9 and verse 8: "And God is able to make all grace abound towards you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound unto every good work." God has promised that if we seek Him first, He is able to give us all sufficiency in all things, that we may abound in every good work.

Applications and Conclusion

Two very quick applications. The first is that covetousness is idolatry. When we lust after or covet something, it is far more than simply desiring something that is not ours. Covetousness dethrones God and enthrones ourselves. We say we do not care what God says

or who God is; we want what we want, and we will do whatever we need to do to get it. That is why covetousness is idolatry. If you and I learn biblical contentment, as did the Apostle Paul, we will be the gainers.

You have to remember that all murmuring and complaining and whining and bellyaching is that which brought judgment upon the children of Israel in the wilderness. It provokes God. It still provokes God. Obviously, it challenges God's wisdom. It challenges His love. It challenges His providence. It is an insult to Him. So if we learn to live without covetousness, we can learn to be content and satisfied with whatever God brings into our life, because we know that He is too loving to be unkind and too wise to make a mistake. We know that whatever He does, He will do for our good and for His glory. So if we learn to live a life without covetousness, we will learn to live a life of contentment and satisfaction.

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we bow to Thee this day. We thank You for Your Word. We thank You for Your truth. And Father, help us to understand and help us to obey. Thou shalt not covet. But, Lord, not just the negative; may we learn the positive. May we learn biblical contentment and biblical trust in Thee, because we know that Thou art too loving to be unkind and too wise to make a mistake. We know that Thy sovereign providence will always bring us that which is for our good and that which is for Thy glory. Give us grace that we may serve Thee acceptably with reverence and godly fear. In Thy name we pray, amen.

CHAPTER 21

Promises of The Law

Part 21

Introduction and Reading of James 2:1-12

James writes, "My brethren, have not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with respect of persons. For if there come unto your assembly a man with a gold ring, in goodly apparel, and there come in also a poor man in vile raiment. And ye have respect to him that weareth the gay clothing, and say unto him, Sit thou here in a good place; and say to the poor, Stand thou there, or sit here under my footstool. Are ye not then partial in yourselves, and are become judges of evil thoughts? Hearken, my beloved brethren, Hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him? But ye have despised the poor. Do not rich men oppress you, and draw you before the judgment seats? Do not they blaspheme that worthy name by the which ye are called? If ye fulfil the royal law according to the scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself, ye do well: But if ye have respect to persons, ye commit sin, and are convinced of the law as transgressors. For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and

yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all. For he that said, Do not commit adultery, said also, Do not kill. Now if thou commit no adultery, yet if thou kill, thou art become a transgressor of the law. So speak ye, and so do, as they that shall be judged by the law of liberty."

Review of Previous Messages on the Necessity of God's Law

I wanted to begin summing up everything shared in the previous 20 messages, but I cannot take the time to review each message. The first seven messages dealt with the absolute necessity of God's Law. Without the Law of God, you do not know what sin is, because the Bible says in Romans 3 and verse 20, "for by the law is the knowledge of sin." Without the Law we would not know anything about salvation, because Galatians 4 tells us that the law is our schoolmaster to bring us unto Jesus Christ. I shared what a schoolmaster did, and how the law is our schoolmaster and taught us as well. Without the law we would know nothing of sanctification.

The Bible says, “this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication,” which would be a violation of God’s law. Without the law, we would know nothing of sanctions, either negative or positive. Read Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 28, and you will be reminded of those sanctions very clearly.

Let me remind you also of a passage we looked at many weeks back: Matthew chapter 5, verses 17–20. Our Lord said, “Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil.”

Christ Came to Fulfill, Not Destroy, the Law

He said, “Think not.” In the Bible, the Apostle Paul would often say, “Perish the thought.” That is the same construction here. When our Lord says, “Think not,” it literally means, Do not even begin to think. Do not even let it enter into your mind. Perish the thought. Do not even begin to think that our Lord came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. He did not come to destroy, but to fulfil. The word “fulfil” is from the Greek word pleroo, which means to fulfil, to fill full, and to put into full force as continuous.

“Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled. Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.”

Our Lord makes it clear that He did not come to nullify the law, abrogate it, or set it aside. Rather, He came to put it into full force as continuous. Moreover, we must remember that the gospel of grace, the gospel of justification by faith alone, does not nullify the law or make it void. So many people say that law and grace are opposites, but that is not true. The Apostle Paul said in Romans 3:31, "Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law." Therefore, any preaching of the Gospel that destroys the Law is not the true Gospel of Jesus Christ. Through justification by faith and the Gospel of Jesus Christ, we do not make void the Law of God; rather, we establish it.

The Greek word for "establish" means to cause to stand, to continue safe and sound, and to continue standing. The same word is used in reference to the foundation of a building. It is the foundation that causes the building to stand. The Apostle Paul therefore said not even to think that the Gospel makes void the Law of God. It does not; it establishes the Law. The Law and Gospel are not antagonistic, contrary, or opposite to each other. They are complementary; that is, they complete each other.

The Law and Gospel Are Complementary, Not Antagonistic

One of the greatest messages I ever read on Law and Grace was written, and actually preached, by Lester Roloff. The message is called "Dr. Law and Dr. Grace." I have that printed message in my library, but you can go online and listen to him preach it, and you would be absolutely astounded. Lester Roloff, as many of you know,

would never call himself a theologian. He was not one to split theological hairs, because he would admit he was not able to do that. But you could not help but love Lester Roloff.

He was so kind and so generous and so gracious. I remember Bob Jones University wanted to give him an honorary doctorate, but he turned it down. When they asked him why, his response, as an old country preacher, was, “That’s kind of like putting whipped cream on an onion; you just don’t do it.” But Lester Roloff could bless your heart in his preaching and singing. Although he could not sing, you could not help but be blessed when he did sing, because it was always from his heart. I encourage you to go online and listen to “Dr. Law and Dr. Grace” by Lester Roloff.

The Royal Law: Origin, Universality, and Benefit

In James chapter 2, verse 8, he says, “If ye fulfil the royal law according to the scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself, ye do well.” So the law here is called the royal law. It is also called the law of liberty, or the perfect law of liberty: “So speak ye, and so do, as they that shall be judged by the law of liberty.”

Notice the problem being dealt with in James chapter 2: the problem of respect of persons. The weaker and poor saints were being neglected, overlooked, and considered riff-raff in order to accommodate what you and I would call the richer people, or those more elegantly dressed and apparently possessing far more money. Beginning in verse 2, he says, “For if there come unto your assembly a man with a gold ring, in goodly apparel, and there come in also a poor man in vile raiment,” who could not afford much, “and ye have respect to him that weareth the gay clothing, and say unto him, Sit thou here in a good place; and say to the poor, Stand thou there,” that is, in the corner, “or sit here under my footstool.”

"Are ye not then partial in yourselves, and are become judges of evil thoughts?" The word "partial" is also very significant. It is the Greek word diakrino, which literally means to judge, to contend, to discriminate, to prefer, and to make a distinction. They were making a distinction between those who apparently had money or wealth and those who apparently had absolutely nothing. They were being partial in judging the poor saint as not being worthy of a decent

place to sit, as though he were not as good as the man who happened to have money. The man in poor clothing got the poorest seat, and the man in elegant clothing with money got the best seat.

The word "evil" is very significant as well. It is the Greek word poneros. Poneros is translated in our Bibles as evil, wicked, the wicked one, and evil things. The Greek construction, ho poneros, refers to the wicked one, or the devil, or Satan. That is a word used for him.

There is another word used in the Bible for evil: kakos. Kakos means that which is bad, evil, worthless, faulty, or ill in and of itself. Here is the difference: If I were to pick up an apple and find two or three wormholes in it, I would say, "This is an evil apple." That is, it is worthless and faulty; I am not going to buy it. That does not mean it is wicked and sinful in and of itself. It is just a bad apple. It is like that old joke: If you have an apple and bite into it, would you rather find a whole worm or half a worm?

I think I would rather find the whole worm, because if you find half of one, you have already got half of him in your mouth. We might call that a bad apple, a faulty apple, or an evil apple. But when you come to the word poneros, it refers to something absolutely evil in and of itself. Thus, in verse 4, James asks, “Are ye not then partial in yourselves, and are become judges of evil thoughts?” You have become judges of that which is positively wicked. If something is positively wicked, it is absolutely a sin.

Let me say this again, as I have said previously in this series: you cannot sin without violating God’s law, because sin is the violation of God’s law. In 1 John 3 and verse 4, the Bible says, “Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law.” If you are doing something that is not a transgression of God’s law, it is not sin.

Some people may not like it or agree with it. It may not be the best choice or action, and it may not be convenient, but it is not sin. Sin is a violation of God’s law. In James chapter 2, the sin of despising a Christian is indeed a violation of God’s law. It is the sin of partiality, preferring one saint over another—and probably many of these were not even saints.

Now, that is the hard part. In verse 5, James says, “Hearken, my beloved brethren, Hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him?” Then he says, “But ye have despised the poor,” these poor saints. He asks, “Do not rich men oppress you, and draw you before the judgment seats?” “Do not they blaspheme that worthy name by the which ye are called?” These were probably not even Christians, but wealthy men who oppressed the poor saints and others, drew them before the judges’ seats, and blasphemed the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Through the Apostle James, our Lord points out that this is extremely wicked.

Look at verse 8: “If ye fulfil the royal law according to the scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself, ye do well: But if ye have respect to persons, ye commit sin, and are convinced of the law as transgressors.” Why is it called the Royal Law? First, it is called the Royal Law because it originates from royalty. It originates from the King of Kings, Lord of Lords, and God of Gods. God is the Great King; the Law is ordained and appointed by God Himself, and it proceeds from His kingly authority. You remember Isaiah 33:22: “For the LORD is our judge, the LORD is our lawgiver, the LORD is our king; he will save us.”

The Lord is our king. He rules over us. The Lord is our lawgiver. He gives His law. And, thirdly, He is our judge. He is the one who judges whether or not we have kept or violated His law. A king rules by his law. God is King, and His royal, divine, and sovereign authority has issued forth His law. When we submit to that law and obey it, we are recognizing, confessing, and acknowledging His sovereignty, power, and authority.

We are going to see in this context the importance of this in loving our neighbor as ourselves. It is called the Royal Law first because it comes from the King. Secondly, it is called a Royal Law because it applies to all: rich or poor, high or low, man or woman, bond or free. It does not matter. When you stop and think about the law in America, does the law apply to every American? It is supposed to. Through partiality it does not, but it is supposed to.

The point is very simple: if God is the King, if He is the true Sovereign, His law applies to everyone. It does not matter who you

are. The third reason it is called the Royal Law is because it is beneficial to all. It is useful, suitable, and necessary in our present state. Moreover, it is a chief law, one that summarizes truth. Let me explain what I mean when I say it is applicable to our present state.

Those of us who are older can remember when things were not as bad as they are now. I remember when I was a boy, my father would take us down to Miami, Florida, for a two-week vacation because my mother's sister lived there with her husband and family. We would spend the time with them, always during the winter. We lived on a farm; Dad had all kinds of tractors and combines, and we never locked our house or windows. When we returned after two weeks in Florida, everything was just as we had left it. You try that today, and you will come back to absolutely nothing because people will steal you blind.

Look at how we have deteriorated in our society and country. It is because we have denied God's law. There is no morality, honesty, or integrity. It is a royal law in the fact that it is useful and beneficial.

The Unity of the Law and the Sin of Partiality

In the immediate context of James chapter 2, James is talking about loving our neighbor as ourselves. But the whole of God's law is called royal. Look at verse 8 again: "If ye fulfil the royal law according to the scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself, ye do well." Then skip down to verse 10: "For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all." He continues, "For he that said, Do not commit adultery, said also, Do not kill. Now if thou commit no adultery, yet if thou kill, thou art become a transgressor of the law."

God's law is a whole; it is one. It cannot be divided, cut, nullified, or abrogated. If you offend in one point, you are guilty of violating the law. If you do not commit adultery or kill, but despise your brother, that is still a violation of God's law. Therefore, you are a sinner.

What James is dealing with in James chapter 2 is indeed a violation of God's law: despising a poor brother and honoring and preferring someone who may not even be a brother above a saint of

God. When he says, "If ye fulfil the royal law according to the scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself, ye do well," the command, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself," is part and parcel of the summary of God's law.

Love as the Summary and Fulfillment of the Law

In Matthew 22, beginning with verse 35, one of the lawyers asked Jesus a question, tempting Him: “Master, which is the great commandment in the law?” That is a good question. Jesus answered, “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 neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.”

Note that when He was asked which is the great commandment of the law, our Lord did not respond, “Thou shalt have no other gods before me,” which is the first commandment. Nor did He say, “Thou shalt not commit adultery,” which is the seventh commandment. Rather, He said, “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart,” and then, “thy neighbour as thyself.”

Why? Because you have the two tables of the law. The first four refer to God, and the last six refer to man. This statement, then, is a summary of God’s law. A summary does not negate the law; it does not negate what it summarizes. I have taught from the fourth grade all the way through college and required book reports. A student would read a book and write a two-, three-, or perhaps five-page report summarizing it. That four- or five-page summary did not negate, nullify, or abrogate a two-hundred-page book. It simply made it very succinct.

That is exactly what our Lord is doing here. Instead of quoting the Ten Commandments, He gives a summary of them: You love the Lord with all your heart, and you love your neighbor as yourself.

Matthew 7:12 gives us another summary: “Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets.” The phrase “the law and the prophets” referred not only to the totality of the Old Testament,

but also to the totality of Scripture, because when the New Testament was written, what existed was the Law and the Prophets. It referred to the whole of Scripture at that particular point. Our Lord says, “Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them.”

We say it like this: treat others as you would want to be treated. That is a summary of the Law. It is saying, “Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.”

So far, our Lord has given the summary: love the Lord with all your heart; love your neighbor as yourself; and do unto others as you would have them do unto you. Luke 10 shows us an application of this summary.

You will be very familiar with this passage. “And, behold, a certain lawyer stood up, and tempted him,” saying, “Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?” Notice how it is always lawyers doing this. Look at what he wanted. He did not ask, “Lord, what is eternal life?” or “How do I receive eternal life?” He asked, “What shall I do?” He wanted to do something.

“And he said unto him, What is written in the law? how readest thou? And he answering said, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself. And he said unto him, Thou hast answered right: this do, and thou shalt live.” In other words, you obey God’s law personally, perfectly, perpetually. Yes, you will live.

Nobody can do that, but he asked the question, and our Lord answered it. Verse 29: "But he, willing to justify himself, said unto Jesus, And who is my neighbour? And Jesus answering said, A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, which stripped him of his raiment, and wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead. And by chance there came down a certain priest that way: and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. And likewise a Levite, when he was at the place, came and looked on him, and passed by on the other side."

Here were the religious rulers in Israel. Watch verse 33: "But a certain Samaritan," whom the Judahites referred to as dogs, "but a

certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was: and when he saw him, he had compassion on him, and went to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him. And on the morrow when he departed, he took out two pence, and gave them to the host, and said unto him, Take care of him; and whatsoever thou spendest more, when I come again, I will repay thee. Which now of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbour unto him that fell among the thieves? And he said, He that shewed mercy on him. Then said Jesus unto him, Go, and do thou likewise."

Do you think that good Samaritan loved this man as himself? Of course. Did he treat him the way he wanted to be treated? If you're riding down the road, hit a puddle of water, hydroplane, leave the road, and find yourself hanging upside down in your car in a ditch, do you want people to keep driving by, or do you want somebody to stop and help you get out? Our Lord said that if you would like somebody to stop and help you get out, then, if you see that, you stop and help them get out. It's just that simple. You do unto others as you would have them do unto you. That's just a summary of God's law. Now look in your Bibles to the book of Galatians, chapter 5.

I'm going to show it to you again. Mark this passage; we will return to Galatians chapter 5 shortly. Paul says, “For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.” How many times has he said that already in the New Testament?

Now, one pastor—and surely there are others—has recently said that we no longer need God’s law, but only our Lord’s command to love one another. I want to emphasize again what has already been emphasized in this series, and I think it is very important, especially in light of what we’re saying. Look in your Bibles to Romans chapter 13. Let’s begin reading there with verse 8. I want you to see what love is according to the Bible.

Love is not feeling. Love is not emotions. Love is not sentimentality. Love according to the Bible is obedience. Look in Romans 13, verse 8. God says, “Owe no man any thing, but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law.” The passage continues: “For this, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou

shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet." Biblical love fulfills the law because it obeys God's commandments; it does not set the law aside.

"And if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended." Notice that it is briefly comprehended, or summarized, in this saying, namely, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." "Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law." What is love? Love is the fulfilling of the law.

Now turn to 1 John chapter 5, verses 2 and 3. "By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments." We know that we love the children of God when we love God and keep His commandments. How do I know, and how does Effie know, that I love her? I have always honored her and respected her. I have not stolen from her, tried to abuse her, or tried to hurt her. All I have tried to do is keep God's law toward her.

The New Commandment: Love as Christ Loved

This is exactly what he is saying: "By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments." Look at verse 3: "For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous." What is the love of God? The love of God is keeping His commandments. It is not grievous to me that I cannot steal; I do not want to steal. It is not grievous to me that I cannot commit adultery; I do not want to commit adultery. It is not grievous to me that I cannot murder; I do not want to murder. This is the love of God, that we keep His commandments.

Now turn to 1 John chapter 2, beginning with verse 3: "And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments." How do I know that I am a genuine Christian? How do I know that I am genuinely saved? Our lives are lives that follow obedience. That does not mean that we are perfect or that we never sin, but it does mean that our lives are characterized by obedience to His law.

Look at verse 4: "He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him." It does not matter what a person says if he is not obedient. The Scripture says he is a liar, and the truth is not in him.

Here is a good question. Some are suggesting that Jesus has now started a new commandment. We will look at that passage in just a moment. Therefore, they say, the law has been set aside, nullified, and abrogated. Here is my question: Do you think Jesus Christ, who is God incarnate—the same Jesus Christ who said in John 10:30, “I and my Father are one”—would do something that was in opposition to His Father, contrary to His Father, and contrary to His commands?

The answer, of course, is no. I want you to look in your Bibles, if you would, to John 13. Go in your Bibles to John 13. I want you to see something that is very informative. Look at John chapter 13, verses 34 and 35. In fact, you can mark it; we will probably come back there. John chapter 13, verse 34: our Lord says, “A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another.” By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.

Now, look at that: a new commandment. One of our problems is that when we read words in the Bible, we put the same connotation on them that we do on the same words in our culture and our society today. Words may be the same, but they do not always mean the same thing.

I will give you an illustration. Did you know the Greek word kosmos for the word “world” has over thirteen different meanings in the Bible? By the way, it is where we get our English word “cosmetics” from. The word kosmos means an orderly arrangement. Some women fail in their orderly arrangements.

Let me show you. You are in John, in John 13, but turn back to John chapter 1. Look, if you would please, at verse 10. Here is the word “world” three times in one verse. Each time it is the Greek word kosmos. Now look what it says, John 1:10, speaking of Jesus Christ: “He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not.”

So you could read it like this: He was in the kosmos, and the kosmos was made by him, and the kosmos knew him not. “He was in the world.” What does that mean? He was in the earth. “And the world was made by him.” That is the universe. “And the world knew him not.” The same word has three different meanings in one sentence. You see what I am saying? Just because you see a word, you cannot put your modern-day connotation on it.

For instance, consider the word “new.” A new commandment. Suppose Alice came and said, “I have a new hat,” or, “I have a new dress.” Everyone who hears that will understand that she has gone to the store and bought a new hat or dress, or at least someone has given it to her, but it is new. You follow that? But what if she said, “I have a new idea”? Does that mean it was something recently purchased? Of course not. What if she said, “What we need is a new start”? Does that mean it was something recently purchased? Of course not. The word “new” can mean several different things.

The Greek word in John 13:34, when our Lord says, “A new commandment I give unto you,” is kainos. It is translated as new, but it also refers to that which was recently made, fresh, recent, novel, uncommon, and unheard of.

Now I want you to look at something with me. Hold John 13:34 and turn in your Bibles to Leviticus chapter 19. Listen to John 13:34: “A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another.” Someone says, “Oh, that’s something brand spanking new.” Really? Look in Leviticus 19:18: “Thou shalt not avenge, nor bear any grudge

Leviticus 19:18 says, “Thou shalt not avenge, nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people, but thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself: I am the LORD.” When our Lord says, “A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another,” how can it be new? It was given in Leviticus 19:18. The newness is not in the commandment: “A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another.” Here is the newness: “as I have loved you.” No one in the Old Testament loved his neighbor as Christ loved his people. He gave himself for us; he laid down his life for us.

Just to prove that love is obedience, not mere sentimentality, it is acting biblically and scripturally toward one another. “By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.” People cannot see sentiment or emotion, but they can see obedience. They can see how you treat each other in reference to the Word of God.

John Trapp, the old Puritan, said it like this: “New, for now there is abundance of spirit given by Christ who writes this affection in our hearts. As of old, the law was written in stone. Besides that, He's become a new pattern, an example of the rule, and so it became a new commandment, not in respect of the matter of the duty, but of the form of observing it.” We already have the duty from Leviticus 19:18, but now we have a newness of form. It is not merely that we love each other; we love each other as Christ loved us.

Christ says, “This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you. Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.” He laid down his life for us. How are we to love? “As I have loved you.” We should be willing to give ourselves for each other, for our brethren. That is the newness. “These things I command you, that ye love one another.”

Turn to Ephesians chapter 5 and verse 2. Here it is again. We have probably never picked up on it, but here it is in black and white: “And walk in love.” How do we walk in love? “As Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweetsmelling savour.”

The Law of Liberty and Christian Freedom

We cannot die sacrificially the way Jesus Christ did, but we can walk in love, and we can be willing to give ourselves and to spend and be spent for the brethren. That is what he said: we walk in love as Christ hath loved us.

Now turn to 1 John chapter 4. Look at verse 21, and then take it in the context: “And this commandment have we from him, That he who loveth God love his brother also.” So we have a commandment that we are to love our brethren. Go back to verse 19: “We love him, because he first loved us.” I hope one day in the not too distant

future I am going to get to preach on this passage: “We love him, because he first loved us.” Has it ever dawned upon you that had God not set his love upon you first, you would have never loved him?

Think of all the years that we wasted not even knowing him, not even thinking about him, not wanting anything to do with him or Christianity. We were completely happy fulfilling the lust of our flesh and the lust of our minds. Then, all of a sudden, His grace appeared unto us and saved us. Now we want to love Him. Why? Only because He first loved us.

“We love him, because he first loved us. If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen? And this commandment have we from him, That he who loveth God love his brother also.”

I have heard professing Christians say about another Christian, “I hate him.” It is impossible to really hate a brother. You may not like him, you may not like what he is doing, and you may not agree with him. You may be willing to rebuke him and reprove him, but you do not hate him. That term is thrown around, especially by the liberals, by the leftists, and by the Marxists.

“Well, he hates so-and-so.” No. He may not like them or agree with them, but he does not have to hate them. I was speaking with a missionary this morning about how desperate our society has become. I read of one physical brother murdering his other brother because he thought that brother was using too much Internet time playing a game. He killed him over the time spent on the Internet.

What our Lord does in this passage—and what James is dealing with—is give us the badge of discipleship: we love one another as He loved us. Clearly, love is not feelings, sentimentality, or emotions; love is obedience. What did He say in John 13:34–35? “A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another.”

“By this”—that is, by obedience—“shall all men know that ye are my disciples.” What happens when we disobey God’s law? The commandment of our Lord Jesus Christ is not contrary to God’s law, because we have already seen it in Leviticus 19:18, but it adds a new

aspect: we are to love each other as he loved us. The duty is the same; the manner of loving is different. That is what is new.

In Galatians 5:13, the Apostle Paul writes, “For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty.” We have been called unto liberty. “Only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another. For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.” But then he warns, “If ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another.” If we do not obey this commandment to love as Christ loved us, the result is that people will be biting, devouring, and consuming one another.

Why is there so much hatefulness in most churches? Why is there so much gossip, backbiting, and ill feeling? It is because we disobey God’s law. I have threatened for years, though I have not done it, to preach a message entitled “Cannibal Christians.” “If ye bite and devour one another,” what did he say? “Take heed that ye be not consumed one of another.” You will get eaten up. Think of what most churches do to preachers—and of what preachers often do to most people.

We are in such a state. I usually say it like this: If our enemies really knew what state we were in, they would leave us alone, and we would kill ourselves. That is just about the truth.

God's law was not only called the royal law; it is also called the law of liberty. God's law gives us liberty. We have liberty to obey, liberty in things that are indifferent, and liberty to live our lives in freedom from sin and wickedness. As long as we are not transgressing God's law, we may do whatever we please. Some people may not like it or agree with it, but that is immaterial. As long as it is not a violation of God's law, it is not sin.

Probably everyone you talk to, if you ask what tree God forbade Adam and Eve to eat from, will answer, “The tree of the knowledge of good and evil.” Tell me, how many trees could they eat from? Eve said, “Out of all the trees of the garden we may freely eat, but this one tree God says don't.” They had liberty and freedom to eat of every other tree, just not that one. Why? Because that one was where God was establishing His sovereignty and authority. He was saying,

“I have the right to tell you what to eat and what not to eat, how to live and how not to live, where to go and where not to go. I am God. I am the Creator. You are the creature.”

That is what God's law is. God is saying, “I am God. I am the King. I am the Sovereign. I have the right to tell you how to live.” As long as you do what He tells you and are not transgressing His law, you are free; you can do whatever else you want to do. Our Lord said in John 8:36, “If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.” That is, you shall be truly, really, genuinely free.

So let me make a couple of quick applications. First, God's law is indeed a royal law. It is the perfect law of liberty, designed to enable us to walk pleasing unto Him while submitting to Him and acknowledging His sovereignty, authority, and kingship. As long as I obey, I am saying by my actions, if not with my mouth, “God is God. He is the Sovereign. He is on the throne.” The second application is this.

Our standard for obedience is not our feelings, emotions, or consciences. You have heard the old adage, “Let your conscience be your guide.” You better not. Your conscience can be ill taught or seared; it is not perfect. That is why a lot of these Indian women would throw their newborn babies into the river for the crocodiles to eat, and their conscience never bothered them because that is how they worshiped their gods—the crocodile god. Look at the things people do: their consciences never bother them, yet they are clear violations of the law of God. God’s law is our standard. Love may be our motivation, but law is our direction.

Applications and Closing Prayer

The third one is this: in one sense of the word, the Gospel is indeed a law. It has all the requirements of the law, with precepts, rewards, and punishments; and next to it, it prescribes duties as well as administers comfort. Christ is not only a King, but also a Prophet and Priest. He is a King to rule over us, a Prophet to declare unto us the Word of God, and a Priest to intercede for us. Romans 8:2 says, “For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.” God refers to the Gospel there as the law of the Spirit.

Matthew Henry said it like this: “It is a law of liberty and one that we have no reason to complain of as a yoke or burden. For the service of God according to the Gospel is perfect freedom.” It sets us at liberty from all slavish regards, either to the persons or the things of this world. We must all be judged by this law of liberty. Men’s eternal condition will be determined according to the Gospel. This is the book that will be opened when we stand before the judgment. There will be no relief for those whom the Gospel condemns, nor will any accusation lie against those whom the Gospel justifies.

It concerns us, therefore, to speak and act as those who must shortly be judged by this law of liberty: that we come up to Gospel terms, make conscience of Gospel duties, be of a Gospel temper, and that our conversation be a Gospel conversation, because by this rule we shall be judged.

Do not think of God’s law in negative terms. I have shown you that every negative has a positive, and I have shown you the promises of God’s law. While God’s law forbids sin, transgressions, and violations of that law, it also proclaims liberty and freedom. One of my favorite passages is Galatians 5:1: “Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage.”

In Jesus Christ, we have real, genuine freedom. We do not have freedom to believe and freedom to obey, but freedom to live, to move, and have our being in Him, doing that which is pleasing in His sight. Those who think this is slavery do not realize that sin is slavery, and they are in bondage themselves. We are the ones who are truly, genuinely free. God’s law is a royal law; it is the perfect law of liberty.

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we bow to You this day. We thank You for Your Word, Your law, and the liberty and freedom that You have given us. Help us, Lord, to be obedient and not to sin against Thee. In the name of Jesus Christ we ask and pray, amen.

CHAPTER 22

Promises of the Law

Part 22

Introduction: The Lord as Judge, Lawgiver, and King

Isaiah 33:22 says, "For the Lord is our judge, the Lord is our lawgiver, the Lord is our King; He will save us." How does one understand the law? Truthfully, the law is a whole—that is, it is complete. In one sense, the word cannot be abrogated. It cannot be broken, divided, nullified, or set aside. And yet James 2:10-11 says, "For whosoever shall keep the whole law and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all. For he that said, Do not commit adultery, also said, Thou shalt not kill. If thou commit no adultery, even if thou kill, thou art become a transgressor of the law." So, if you violate one point of the law, then you are guilty of violating the whole.

In Isaiah 33:22, "For the Lord is our judge" is judicial. "The Lord is our lawgiver" is legislative. "The Lord is our king" is executive, or the one who rules over and oversees everything. History tells us that this passage is where our founding fathers got the three divisions of our government: executive, legislative, and judicial. James 4:12

emphasizes this reality when it says, "For there is one lawgiver who is able to save and destroy: who art thou that judgest another?"

The Oneness of God and His Law

The Hebrew word for law is Torah, and it means a pointing out, direction, or an authoritative direction. The law, then, is nothing less than God's authoritative direction for our lives. Where there is a rejection of God's law, there necessarily follows a rejection of God, for God and His law are one. The alternative to God's law is humanism.

Usually we talk about theonomy. Theos is the Greek word for God, and nomos is the Greek word for law. Therefore, theonomy is nothing more than God's law. There is another word that we use quite frequently, and that is autonomy. Autos is the Greek word for self, and nomos is the Greek word for law. Autonomous individuals are ones who have a law unto themselves. It is self-law in contradistinction to God's law.

The Bible tells us in Deuteronomy 12:8, “You shall not do after all the things that we do here this day, every man that which is right in his own eyes.” In the book of Judges, twice we are told that there was no king in Israel in those days, and every man did that which was right in his own eyes. In reality, the alternative to God’s law, the alternative to theonomy, is humanism. It may be autonomy or some other form of humanism, but it is still humanism.

In any culture or society, one’s law is the god of that society. When anthropologists study an ancient culture, they want to know the source of law for that culture. Once they discern the source of law, they know who the god of that culture really is. Men are either going to submit to God’s law, or they are going to submit to the law that emanates from the god of their imagination. They will either be theonomists or autonomous.

Autonomy as Rebellion and Idolatry

This is why many leading atheistic philosophers, thinkers, and scholars view the state as God. Hegel basically said that the state was God walking on earth: “The state is the highest embodiment of the

divine idea on earth, and the chief means used by the absolute in manifesting itself as it unfolds towards perfect fulfillment." In other words, it is the state that is going to bring in utopia and perfection. Hegel said that the state is the highest form of social existence; you cannot get any higher than the state.

The alternative to refusing and rejecting God's law is either some form of humanism or what we would call autonomy. Autonomy is nothing less than self-law, and self-law is nothing less than rebellion against God and His law.

God demanded one law for His people and one law for the stranger. In Exodus 12:49, God said, "One law shall be to him that is homeborn and unto the stranger that sojourneth among you." Leviticus 24:22 says, "You shall have one manner of law, as well for the stranger as for one of your own country: I am the Lord your God." Numbers 15:16 says, "One manner of law shall be for you and for the stranger that sojourneth with you." So God says there is

There is to be one law, and of course that would be His law. When you talk about autonomy, that is an additional law—your law—being added to or placed above the law of God. So any additional law, regardless of its source, is a denial of the one God and the one law that He has issued. It is a denial of the completeness of God, and it brings the judgment of God upon a people.

Now consider Hosea 4:6 in light of this context. God says, "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee, that thou shalt be no priest to me: seeing thou hast forgotten the law of thy God, I will also forget thy children." When He says, "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: because thou hast rejected knowledge," He is speaking specifically of His law, the knowledge of His law. Then He says in the latter part of the verse, "Seeing that thou hast forgotten the law of thy God, I will also forget thy children." This is known as the lex talionis of Scripture. The term lex talionis is simply Latin for the law of retribution. It is where God makes the punishment fit the crime.

The law is an expression of God's will for our lives. Children are an expression of our wills. We wanted them. We had them. So God

says, if you forget the expression of My will, which is My law, I will forget the expression of your will, which is your children. There you have the lex talionis and absolute, perfect justice. God righteously forgets our children because we have unrighteously forgotten His law.

Now that should give us a clue as to why the younger people in our land today are so corrupt, so depraved, so wicked, so rebellious, and so suicidal—because we have basically rejected God's law and He is rejecting our children. Now, God's law is the absolute moral order to which everyone must conform. One cannot admit a different law system without admitting a new or different God. Now remember, if you would, under the covenant of God with Israel, He was the one true and the living God. When they forsook God and forsook His law, they then went under another law and another God, and if you'll skip down to verse 12 of Hosea chapter 4, I want you to see what God calls it. Hosea 4 and verse 12.

He says, "My people ask counsel at their stocks, and their staff declareth unto them: for the spirit of whoredoms hath caused them to err, and they have gone a-whoring from under their God." In other words, when they forsook God's law, when they turned to other gods, it was called spiritual adultery, or whoremongering is exactly what it is. So, here's something important for you to understand. When someone changes law, he actually changes gods. And if anyone ever changes gods, he automatically changes law. You've heard me say this repeatedly, that a king rules by his law. And it is no different when you talk about the King of Kings and Lord of Lords and God of Gods.

Now, I want you to turn in your Bibles, if you would, to 1 Samuel chapter 8. You should be familiar with this passage, but I want you to see it in light of what I'm trying to teach you, because the Bible teaches there is one God and one law. One God, one law. Notice, if you would, 1 Samuel chapter 8, and look if you would please at verse 4. 1 Samuel chapter 8, verse 4: "Then all the elders of Israel gathered themselves together and came to Samuel unto Ramah, and said unto him, Behold, thou art old, and thy sons walk not in thy ways."

“Now make us a king to judge us like all the nations.” But the thing displeased Samuel when they said, “Give us a king to judge us.”

And Samuel prayed unto the Lord. And the Lord said unto Samuel, "Hearken unto the voice of the people, and all that they say unto thee: for they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them."

When they wanted a man king, God called it a rejection of Himself, a rejection of His rule. He told Samuel, "Therefore hearken unto their voice: howbeit yet protest solemnly unto them, and show them the manner of the king that shall reign over them." And Samuel told all the words of the Lord unto the people that asked of him a king. He said, "This will be the manner of the king that shall reign over you."

"He will take your sons and appoint them for himself and for his chariots, to be his horsemen; and some shall run before him. And he will appoint him captains over thousands, captains over fifties, and will set them to ear his ground and reap his harvest, and to make his instruments of war and instruments of chariots. And he will take your daughters…" You can read all the way down, and all the king is going to do is take, take, take, take.

The point is this: they changed kings, and they changed gods, and they changed law. They traded God for a man, and they traded God's law for man's law.

In 1 Samuel 12:12, it is stated again plainly: "And when you saw that Nahash the king of the children of Ammon came against you, you said unto me, Nay; but a king shall reign over us: when the Lord your God was your king." They traded God for a man, and they then traded God's law for man's law.

God's description of what the Israelites did when they turned from following His law to following man's law is found in 2 Kings 17:7: "For so it was that the children of Israel had sinned against the Lord their God, which had brought them up out of the land of Egypt, from under the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt, and had feared other gods."

Now, note what God says happened. The children of Israel, whom He brought up out of the land of Egypt from under the hand of Pharaoh, feared other gods. So here is my question: What is the proof? What is the evidence that they feared other gods? Watch the

next verse, verse 8. The latter part of verse 7 says, "...from under the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt, had feared other gods, and walked in the statutes of the heathen, whom the Lord cast out from before the children of Israel, and of the kings of Israel, which they had made."

What were they doing to fear other gods? They were walking in the statutes, or laws, of the heathen, or in the statutes, or laws, of the kings of Israel. You must remember that the kings of Israel were reprobates. There was not one good king in the northern kingdom. Jeroboam made the two golden calves, putting one in Dan and the other in Bethel.

So God says they feared other gods. How did they fear other gods? The answer is by refusing and rejecting God's law and walking under man's law. He called it fearing other gods. Therefore, failure to obey and walk in God's law is indeed idolatry. When you and I reject and refuse God's law and serve man's law, we are guilty of adultery.

I understand that man's law should be in conformity with God's law. But when it contradicts God's law, our position should be like that of the apostles in Acts 5:29: "We ought to obey God rather than man." Clearly, then, we are talking about idolatry—turning from God to man—and He called it fearing other gods. Now God is one, and His law is one. When an individual refuses God's law, which declares what is right and wrong, he is, in essence, determining for himself what is right and wrong.

The Law as a Whole with Distinct Aspects

You remember the temptation in Genesis chapter 3, in the Garden of Eden. The serpent said to Eve, "You shall be as gods, knowing good and evil." The Hebrew word for "knowing" has the force of "determining": "You shall be as gods, determining good and evil." In other words, you do not need God to tell you what to do. You can become a god yourself and determine what is right and wrong, what is good and evil. That is autonomy. That is self-law.

So I hope you are getting the idea that God is one and His law is one. You must understand that one absolute, unchanging law demands one unqualified obedience. We are required to give obedience to God's law. The wholeness, or oneness, of God's law

does not mean that it cannot be viewed in separate aspects or distinct characteristics. Usually, when people think about the law of God, they say, “The law is divided into three parts: ceremonial, moral, and judicial.”

Some people say, “I do not like those terms. Those are man's divisions and man's terminology.” It may be, but we use an awful lot of words that originate with man. Most of them originated with man in one shape, form, or fashion. Some people adhere to the rapture theory. Do you realize that the word “rapture” does not occur in Scripture? Not at all. Yet people use that word all the time.

You hear people talking about the attributes of God. If I use that phrase, you know automatically that I am talking about the omniscience, omnipotence, omnipresence, immensity, infinity, and eternality of God—describing what God has revealed concerning Himself in the Bible. Every major theology book in existence has a section on the attributes of God. Yet the word “attributes” does not occur in the Bible. You could use the word “characteristics,” but I do not even think that word occurs in the Bible.

We are using words to convey ideas and concepts. The truth is, we are not going to reject the attributes of God simply because someone thought of them years ago and began using them in theological books. We confess that we believe in the triune God: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. Yet the word "triune" is not in the Bible; someone came up with it. We say that we believe in the Trinity or that we are Trinitarians, but neither "Trinity" nor "Trinitarianism" is in the Bible. These are words that convey a concept.

We do this all the time. We use words that convey ideas. If I asked whether you believe man is made up of two parts, body and soul, and you answered yes, I would say that you believe in dichotomy and are a dichotomist. If I asked whether you believe man is made up of three parts—body, soul, and spirit—and you answered yes, I would say that you are a trichotomist and believe in trichotomy. Those are words that convey concepts. "Dichotomy" and "trichotomy" are not in the Bible.

If I asked whether you believe God chose His people without a view of the fall, and you answered yes, that would make you, theologically speaking, a supralapsarian. If you believe God chose His people in view of the fall, that would make you an infralapsarian or sublapsarian. These are terms we use theologically. Likewise, the terms "Calvinism" and "Arminianism" each convey an entire body of thought and doctrine. If I use either term, you know what I am talking about; I do not have to explain it. But neither "Calvinism" nor "Arminianism" is found in the Bible.

Certain verses might support some of these points, but the terms “restorative law” and “moral law” are not found in Scripture. Some have suggested that we should talk about God's law using those terms. When people hear “moral law,” they automatically think of the Ten Commandments. Yet it must be pointed out that all of God's law is moral. There is no such thing as immorality in the law of God. I do not care whether you are talking about the ceremonial law or the judicial law; it is moral. What we commonly call the Ten Commandments is moral as well.

The Ceremonial Law: Shadow and Fulfillment

We use terms to distinguish things that are different. God's law is a whole, although it is made up of distinctive parts. Man is a whole, though he is made up of parts—body and soul, or body, soul, and spirit, regardless of your position. The parts make up a whole. In the same way, God's law can be divided into parts, but those parts remain a whole.

Consider the term “ceremonial law.” Why would someone describe an aspect of God's law as ceremonial law? The answer is that this was how God was publicly worshipped in the Old Testament. It was through ceremonies that He ordained and described. If you do not think His ceremonial worship was serious, ask Nadab and Abihu. They abused it in Leviticus chapter 10, and God sent fire down from heaven and consumed them. Obviously, these were ceremonies.

There was even a ceremony performed in Deuteronomy chapter 21 when a man was found murdered and no one knew who had murdered him. The elders measured to the nearest city. Then the

elders of that city took a heifer that had never been broken to a yoke, cut off her head in a valley, washed their hands, and said, “Our eyes have not seen, we don’t know who did this.” In effect, they were saying, “Lord, if we knew who did this, it would not be the heifer lying here with her head chopped off; it would be the murderer.”

But it was a ceremony. Consider all the sacrificial ceremonies, rites, rituals, and offerings: all of these things pictured the Lord Jesus Christ.

SCRIPTURE READING - Hebrews 9:1-9 (KJV)

Now, I want to point out something for you, if you would please. I want you to think with me. We are talking about something that pictures. I want you to turn in your Bibles, if you would, to the book of Hebrews chapter 9. Hebrews chapter 9, and notice if you would please what the Bible says, particularly of these Old Testament rites and rituals. We're going to look at a couple of passages. We'll look in Hebrews chapter 9, beginning there with verse 1. The Bible says:

"Then verily the first covenant had also ordinances"—that would be ceremonies—"of divine service, and a worldly sanctuary. For there was a tabernacle made; the first, wherein was the candlestick, and the table, and the showbread; which is called the sanctuary. And after the second veil, the tabernacle which is called the Holiest of all; which had the golden censer, and the ark of the covenant overlaid round about with gold, wherein was the golden pot that had manna, and Aaron's rod that budded, and the tables of the covenant.

"And over it the cherubims of glory shadowing the mercy seat; of which we cannot now speak particularly. Now when these things were thus ordained, the priests went always into the first tabernacle, accomplishing the service of God. But into the second went the high priest alone once every year, not without blood, which he offered for himself, and for the errors of the people: the Holy Ghost this signifying, that the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest, while as the first tabernacle was yet standing: which was a figure for the time then present, in which were offered both gifts and sacrifices,

> that could not make him that did the service perfect as pertaining to the conscience."
>
> So here in Hebrews chapter 9, he is saying that everything that happened in the Old Testament in the tabernacle and later on in the temple was nothing but a figure. It was a type. It was not reality.

"For the law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices"—there is the ceremonial law—"which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect. For then would they not have ceased to be offered? because that the worshippers once purged should have no more conscience of sins. But in those sacrifices there is a remembrance again made of sins every year."

He is saying that everything in the Old Testament in regard to these sacrifices and ceremonies was nothing but a shadow. It was not reality. The law was speaking of good things to come, but it was not the very image of those things. If those sacrifices could have made the worshippers perfect, they would have ceased to be offered. Instead, they made a remembrance of sins every year.

Hebrews 9:22 says, "And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission." Then he says, "It was therefore necessary that the patterns of things in the heavens should be purified with these"—the patterns of things in heaven. What is he talking about? The tabernacle and the temple. "But the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these."

Alice has made dresses for years, and she buys patterns. She cuts out the material and makes the dress. The material is the dress, not the pattern. The pattern is not the reality. In the same way, the blood of bulls and goats purified the patterns, but the heavenly things themselves required better sacrifices.

There is a difference between the pattern and the reality, between the shadow and the reality, and between the ceremony and the reality. Everything being discussed in the Old Testament concerning these sacrifices and ceremonies was nothing more than a pattern, a type, a shadow, or a figure.

Suppose you are alive in the Old Testament period, and you want to be obedient, worship God, and give Him the honor and glory due unto His name. What do you do? You bring a sacrifice. You come to the temple, to the altar, and to the priest. God forbade you to offer it in the field. Therefore, if you do not bring the sacrifice, come to the temple, come to the high priest, and come to the altar, you do not worship God. It is just that simple.

The ceremonial law has not been nullified, abrogated, or set aside. I have people say, "Well, I don't come with an offering, and I don't come to an altar, and I don't come to a priest, and I don't come to a temple." Well, let me tell you this: If you do not, then you are not worshiping the one true and living God. How can I say that? First Corinthians 5, verse 7, says, "For even Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us." He is our offering. Hebrews 13, verse 10, says, "We have an altar, whereof they have no right to eat which serve the tabernacle"—that is, the types and shadows. Jesus Christ is our altar. Hebrews chapter 4 says, "We have a great high priest that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God," and commands us to hold fast our profession of faith. Revelation 21, verse 22, says, "And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple thereof."

Do you understand that when we worship God today, we come with a sacrifice—the person and work of Jesus Christ? We come to the high priest—Jesus Christ. We come to the altar—Jesus Christ. We come to the temple—Jesus Christ. We no longer have types, shadows, emblems, or the pattern; we have the reality. That is why Jesus Christ said in John 14, verse 6, "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me."

So the ceremonial law still stands in the sense that we have its perfect fulfillment in Jesus Christ. Everything in the Old Testament foreshadowed the Son of God, who is the completion of all those Old Testament sacrifices.

What about the judicial law? Turn in your Bibles, if you would, to Exodus chapter 22. When we speak of "judicial," we refer to judges and law courts; even today, we call our law courts the judicial system. The same thing is true in the Old Testament. When you look

at Exodus chapter 22, you find many things here that involve the judges.

The Judicial Law: Sanctions and God's Justice

For instance, verse 1: “If a man shall steal an ox or a sheep, and kill it or sell it; he shall restore five oxen for an ox, and four sheep for a sheep.” That is restitution. “If a thief be found breaking up, and be smitten that he die, there shall no blood be shed for him.” Verse 4 says, “If the theft be certainly found in his hand alive, whether it be ox, or ass, or sheep; he shall restore double.” Verse 5 adds, “If a man shall cause a field or vineyard to be eaten, and shall put in his beast, and shall feed in another man's field; of the best of his own field, and of the best of his own vineyard, shall he make restitution.” Verse 6 then addresses fire. Verse 7 says, “If a man shall deliver unto his neighbor money or stuff to keep, and it be stolen out of the man's house; if the thief be found, let him pay double. If the thief be not found, then the master of the house shall be brought unto the judges, to see whether he have put his hand unto his neighbor's goods.” “For all manner of trespass, whether it be for ox, for ass, for sheep, for raiment, or for any manner of lost thing, which another challengeth to be his, the cause of both parties shall come before the judges; and whom the judges shall condemn, he shall pay double unto his neighbor.” This is the judicial aspect of God's law. God has sanctions against those who violate His law.

Deuteronomy 17:11–12 reveals the judicial aspect of God's law. Here is someone who has been before God's judges and does not want to abide by their decision. The command addressed both the sentence of the law which they taught and the judgment which they declared: “According to the sentence of the law which they shall teach thee, and according to the judgment which they shall tell thee, thou shalt do ... thou shalt not decline from the sentence which they shall show thee, to the right hand, nor to the left.” The man who acted presumptuously—that is, he would not obey the decision of a biblical court of law—and would not hearken unto the priest that standeth to minister there before the Lord thy God, or unto the judge, was to die, and Israel was to put away the evil from among them. Thus, it was a capital punishment to refuse to abide by the decision of a biblical court of law. That's judicial.

Deuteronomy 25:1–2 gives another judicial example: “If there be a controversy between men, and they come unto judgment, that the judges may judge them; then shall they justify the righteous, and condemn the wicked. And it shall be, if the wicked man be worthy to be beaten, that the judge shall cause him to lie down, and to be beaten before his face, according to his fault, by a certain number.” So this is purely judicial. The judicial aspect of God's law involves the application of sanctions. The law was applied, judges were involved in the judicial process, and the judges were to rule for God and in accordance to God's law. This was not a private determination by individuals; it was carried out through appointed judges.

Second Chronicles 19:6 says, “And to the judges he said, Take heed what you do: for you judge not for man, but for the Lord, who is with you in the judgment.” The judges in Bible times were to judge for the Lord. Our Lord used something similar in Luke 12:58: “When thou goest with thine adversary to the magistrate…” He was speaking of a judicial process. There is no way around the judicial aspect of God's law, because there were sanctions. You and I did not simply determine that we wanted to apply those sanctions. It was a legal, judicial act: judges were appointed, they heard the case, determined who was guilty, and applied the sanction to that guilty individual. We have covered the ceremonial and the judicial. How about the moral?

The Moral Law: Righteousness and Sanctification

I have stated earlier that all of God's law is moral. Anything and everything that God says and does is moral, right, and holy. Moreover, He has commanded us, "Be holy, for I am holy."

Is honoring your father and your mother moral, right, and holy? Is refusing to murder and engage in unjust violence moral, right, and holy? Is refusing to commit adultery, steal, lie, gossip, slander, and bear false report moral, right, and holy? Is refusing to covet and desire to possess something that belongs to your neighbor moral, right, and holy?

The answer is yes. Therefore, we are talking about the moral law. Is it moral, right, and holy to worship only the one true and living God? Is it moral, right, and holy not to have idols in your house, not

to take God's name in vain, and to observe the Sabbath? Yes. God's law is a moral law.

People can quibble over words all day long, yet words convey concepts. Whether someone likes or agrees with the words is immaterial. There was indeed a ceremonial aspect to the law. There is a judicial aspect to the law. There is a moral aspect to the law. None of God's law has been set aside; none of it has been abrogated. The ceremonial law is still in full effect.

The only truth is that we no longer have the shadows, the types, the temple, or the emblems. We have reality: the Lord Jesus Christ. He is our great high priest, our sacrifice, our altar, our temple, and our reality. The judicial law is still in effect. God still demands restitution for theft and the death penalty for certain sins and crimes.

Someone may say, "The magistrates today, they're not executing the criminals. A man that murders today usually doesn't get executed. He usually gets seven or eight years in prison and he's out." But just because earthly magistrates fail to enforce God's law does not mean that God will not enforce His law. I told our people this morning that, in the early church, individuals committed adultery, repented, and were restored to the church. But do you know what the people were referred to?

They were called the walking dead. Why? Because the church did not have the power to execute them, and the Roman government certainly was not going to execute them. But that did not mean that God would not do so in His time. It is just like someone today who murders another man and is never caught—at least by man. That does not mean he has escaped judgment, because God is the judge and God is the avenger.

So the judicial law is still in effect. The moral law is still in effect because morality is determined by God and not by man. God is one, and His law is one. While the law is one whole, it does have constituent parts. Whatever you want to call those parts, they make up the whole. You cannot deny one without denying the other. He who denies God's law, in essence, denies God who gave the law.

Our Lord said essentially the same thing in John 12:48: "He that rejecteth me"—that is, the living Word—"He that rejecteth me and receiveth not my words"—that is, the written Word—"hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day." For someone to say, "I believe in Jesus Christ, but I do not believe the Bible," is impossible. Or, "I believe the Bible, but I do not believe in Jesus Christ." That is impossible, because Jesus Christ and His Word are one. Jesus Christ is God, God is one, and His law is one. You cannot reject the law of God without rejecting the God who gave the law.

Applications and Conclusion

Do not allow minor objections to thwart and overthrow your estimation of and obedience to the law of God. No one can be holy apart from the law of God. Justification is by faith alone. The law is not our standard for salvation or justification. There has never been anyone saved by keeping the law, and there will never be anyone saved by keeping the law. But just because God never gave the law for justification does not mean that it is not good for anything. It is certainly good for our sanctification. It is impossible to be holy apart from the law. Holiness is defined by God, not by man.

Remember 1 Thessalonians 4:3: "For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication." Sanctification, or holiness, is shown by abstaining from fornication, which would be a violation of the seventh commandment, the tenth commandment, and the first commandment. Sanctification is holiness; it is being set apart unto God. No one who is continually and consistently violating the first, seventh, and tenth commandments could possibly be considered a moral individual. Such a person is immoral because he is violating God's law.

The second application is this: If you do not like the term "ceremonial law," substitute "shadow law" or "pattern law." It is the same thing, because that is what the Bible says the ceremonies were. They were patterns, types, and emblems. If you do not like the word "moral," substitute "righteous." Whatever is moral is righteous, and whatever is righteous is moral. Words simply convey ideas. If you do not like the word "judicial," substitute "legal" or "judicatory." It is

the same thing; it conveys the truth. The problem is not with words, but with people who do not want to acknowledge or submit to the law of God.

And here is something I find very interesting. People who usually deny the law of God and try to say the law of God is not in effect, that it has been nullified, set aside, and abrogated—wow. They can say that, but at the same time, they do not want their spouse to run out and commit adultery. They do not want to be the recipients of murder or unjust violence. They do not want to be stolen from, and they do not want to have everything they ever worked for taken away from them. In other words, you can deny in words, but in reality, you want someone to treat you the way God says you should be treated. So clearly, you are going to say, "I want God's law." You see, God's law stands.

It is our direction for life. It is our sanctification, our holiness, and our practical righteousness.

Now I want to show you two passages before I close. Turn to Leviticus chapter 5 and Isaiah 51. I will quote a passage in between these. We are going to Leviticus chapter 5 first, and we will read verse 14.

"And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, If a soul commit a trespass"—now trespass is a sin—"If a soul commit a trespass and sin through ignorance in the holy things of the Lord"—that would be the law, and especially the ceremonial law here—"then he shall bring for his trespass unto the Lord a ram without blemish out of the flocks, with thy estimation by shekels of silver, after the shekel of the sanctuary, for a trespass offering"—or a sin offering—"and he shall make amends for the harm that he hath done in the holy thing"—that would be the law—"and shall add the fifth part thereto, and give it unto the priest: and the priest shall make an atonement for him with the ram of the trespass offering, and it shall be forgiven him."

But note, if you would please, the law there is referred to as "the holy thing." And note, if you would, he keeps talking about a trespass. If you trespass against God, it is a sin. The Bible says in 1

John 3 in verse 4, “Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth”—or trespasseth—“also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law.”

You cannot sin against God without violating His law. The law is a holy thing, and if you trespass against these ceremonies, it must be taken care of the way He said.

Isaiah 51:7 says, “Hearken unto me, ye that know righteousness, the people in whose heart is my law; fear ye not the reproach of men, neither be ye afraid of their revilings.” Who is it that knows righteousness? The people in whose heart is God’s law.

May I remind you that Jeremiah 31, Hebrews chapter 8, and Hebrews chapter 10 speak about the new covenant. In that covenant, God is going to write His law upon our hearts. The reason we know what is right and wrong is because we, as the people of God, not only have the written Word of God, but have that law written in our hearts.

God’s law is the direction for our lives. God’s law is the will for our lives. How do I know how to walk pleasing unto the Lord? Because He has told me: “Honor thy father and thy mother.” “Thou shalt not kill.” “Thou shalt not commit adultery.” “Thou shalt not steal.” “Thou shalt not bear false witness.” “Thou shalt not covet.” I know what is pleasing unto Him because of His law. So you can divide it into ceremonial, judicial, and moral.

But you have to remember that everything makes up one whole. God is one, and His law is one. None of it has been set aside. None of it has been abrogated or nullified. If you want to please God, walk according to His law.

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we bow to You this day. We thank You, Father, for Your Word. We thank You for Your truth. We thank You, Heavenly Father, for Thy law. And we pray, Father, that You would make us obedient, make us holy, and make us godly. In the name of Jesus Christ, we ask and pray. Amen.

CHAPTER 23

The Promises of the Law 23

Introduction and the Law of Christ

Today we are going to do number 23 of the Promises of the Law. I thought I was through with this last week, but I got another question this past week, so I am going to do one more and try to answer it.

Years ago I heard about an old black preacher who was very successful in his ministry. Someone asked him how he was so successful and had taught his people so well. He said there were three things: when he started to preach, he told them what he was going to tell them; secondly, he told them; and thirdly, he told them what he had told them. I hope today I will not merely tell you what I have already told you, but that you can put everything together. Look in Galatians chapter 6 and verse 2. I hope this will answer all of the questions.

The Bible simply says, "...bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ." Now, there are plenty of individuals who will state very plainly that they follow the Law of Christ. The problem is that many people try to take the Law of Christ and make it completely and totally different from the Law of God. Many refer to

the Law simply as the Law of Moses. It was not the Law of Moses. It is and was the law of God. It was just given through Moses as the intermediary.

The Law of Moses is the Law of God

Let me give you two Scriptures. You do not have to turn to them; I will quote them for you. The first is found in Ezra chapter 7 and verse 6. The Bible says, “This Ezra went up from Babylon, and he was a ready scribe in the law of Moses, which the Lord God of Israel had given.” It is called the Law of Moses, but it also says, “...which the Lord God of Israel had given.”

When you get to Nehemiah chapter 10 and verse 29, the Bible said, “...they claimed to their brethren, their nobles, and they entered into a curse, and into an oath to walk in God's law, which was given by Moses, the servant of God, and to observe, to do all the commandments of the Lord our God, and His judgments and His statutes.” So, specifically, we are told at least twice, and other times I am sure, that it is indeed the law of God. It was just given through the hands of Moses.

When you talk about the law of God, you have to understand that there is a vast difference between the law of God and the perversion, misinterpretation, and misapplication that the Pharisees made of it. The teaching of the Pharisees certainly is not the law of God by any stretch of the imagination. When we read in Galatians 6 and verse 2, “...bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ,” the question is this: Is the law of Christ any different from the law of God? Are they one and the same? To understand this, you have to understand how the word law is used in Scripture.

Various Uses of 'Law' in Scripture

The Bible talks about the law of works, the law of God, the law of Christ, the law of the Spirit, and the law of sin. You have to look into the context of each passage in order to ascertain what is being said, what is implied, and what is meant. Turn to Romans chapter 7, because there is a distinction between the law of God and what is known as the law of sin. In Romans 7 and verse 25, the apostle Paul says, “I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord, so that with my

mind, or the mind, I myself serve the law of God, but with the flesh, the law of sin." In one verse, you have the law of God versus the law of sin.

Now, if you go back to verse 12, Paul is discussing the law of God, and he says, "Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good."

In Romans 7:22 he says, "For I delight in the law of God after the inward man." So here is the law of God, which is holy, just, and good, and it is that in which the apostle delighted. In Romans 7:23 he is talking now about the law of sin: "But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members." Now, when he says, "I see another law," the Greek word there is heteros, which means another of a different kind. It is not the same as the law of God. That is why we talk about heterosexual marriage, which is a marriage between two different kinds, between a man and a woman. So here is another law, but it is another of a different kind. That is why he says, "I see another law in my members," and in verse 25 he explains it: "But with the flesh the law of sin." In other words, the law of sin works in the flesh.

The interesting thing is this: the Greek word nomos is used in connection with God, with Christ, with the Spirit, with sin, and with faith as well as with works. In Romans 3:27 it is used with the law of faith: "Whereas boasting then it is excluded by what law? of works? Nay, but by the law of faith." So we now have the law of God, the law of Christ, the law of sin, and the law of faith. Then Romans 8:2 says, "For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death." Thus, we have the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus, which has made us free from the law of sin and death.

Do you think anyone would suggest that there is a difference between the law of God, the law of Christ, and the law of the Spirit? I would certainly hope that the answer would be no to that—a resounding no. Also, we could ask it like this: Do you think anyone would suggest that there would be a difference between the law of the Spirit and the law of faith? I would certainly say no.

Definition of 'Law' and Its Broad Meaning

Yet the same word, nomos, is used in each one of these passages. A broad overview of the word law is helpful. Strong's Concordance gives a variety of definitions. Many are basically the same, but two or three have a little different flavor. Nomos means anything established, anything received by usage, custom, a law, or command; secondly, any law whatsoever. But notice this definition: a law or rule producing a state approved by God—a law or rule producing a state that is approved by God. It may also mean the observance of that which is approved of God, a precept or injunction, or the rule of action prescribed by reason. In referring to the Mosaic law, depending on the context, it may mean either the volume of the law or its contents.

It may also mean the Christian religion, the law demanding faith, and the moral instruction given by Christ, especially the precept concerning love. Sometimes the word law refers not just to the Pentateuch, the first five books of the Bible, but to the whole Old Testament. Notice that the word may refer to a law or rule producing that which is approved by God, the observance of anything approved by God, and the Christian religion, which demands faith and moral instruction, especially that which is in relationship to Jesus Christ.

Consider another thought from Albert Barnes in his commentary on Romans 8:2: "...for the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death." Barnes explains, "...the word law here means that rule, command, or influence which the Spirit of life produces. It exerts a control which is here called a law. And often, for often, law means anything by which we are ruled or governed." When you stop and think about that, it makes perfect sense, because we talk about the law of sin. The law of sin does not have statutes.

It does not have commands. The law of sin simply means that we are governed and controlled by sin; we are regulated by sin. Our lusts, our desires—everything—is contrary to the Word of God. The law of the Spirit means that we are now controlled and ruled by the Holy Spirit, who leads and guides us to bring our lives into conformity with the Word of God. Thus, the word law is used as a

controlling or dominant influence in one's life. It means that by which we are ruled or governed.

One author said it like this: “The law of the Spirit is the principle or authority exercised by the Holy Spirit which bestows life and which rests in Christ Jesus our Lord.” And that is certainly true.

Here are a couple of commentaries. Matthew Poole said, “Some understand here, talking about Romans 8:2, by the doctrine of the gospel, which is called the law, the spirit of life, because it is the ministry of the spirit of life.” Matthew Henry says, “The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus does it. The covenant of grace made with us in Christ is a treasury of merit and grace, and hence we receive pardon and a new nature, are freed from the law of sin and death”—that is, both from the guilt and power of sin, from the curse of the law and the dominion of the flesh. “We're under another covenant, another master, another husband, and under the law of the Spirit, and that law that gives the Spirit spiritual life to qualify us for the eternal.”

“The foundation of this freedom is laid in Christ's undertaking for us, in which he speaks.” Thus, he is saying that the law of the Spirit is nothing more than the person and work of Jesus Christ.

Now, let me ask you some questions. I want us to look in Galatians 6 and verse 2 in just a little while. I am absolutely assured that you know the answers. My reason for asking is not to elicit your answer per se, but to get you thinking in a particular direction, so that we can answer whether the law of Christ and the law of God are one and the same, or whether they are different.

Jesus Christ as God and Lawgiver

So here is my first question: How many gods are there? The answer is one. There is only one true and living God. Deuteronomy 6:4 says, “Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord.” The burden of the Old Testament is the unity of God: God is one, yet Scripture tells us that He has manifested Himself in three persons, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

The second question is this: Is Jesus Christ God? Is Jesus Christ God incarnate, God in the flesh? The answer is most definitely yes.

John 1:1-3 says, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by Him, and without Him was not anything made that was made.” Verse 14 continues, “And the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.”

Then 1 Timothy 3:16 declares, “And without controversy, great is the mystery of godliness. God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, and received up into glory.” Without controversy, great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh. Jesus Christ is God in the flesh. Indeed, Jesus Christ Himself said in John 10:30, “I and the Father are one.”

If Jesus Christ is God in the flesh, if He and the Father are one, did He give the law originally? The answer is yes. If He gave the law, why would He now change the law? You would have to say it was either not perfect or right before, or that God was not omniscient enough to know there would necessitate a change sometime in the future.

Both would be absolutely blasphemous thoughts. The only way that you can postulate a change in law is to postulate a change in God. Malachi 3:6 says, “I the Lord change not, therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed.” God is immutable. He is unchangeable.

I believe it was a man by the name of Bishop Ocknam who said at one point, “The God of the Old Testament is a dirty bully.” If he believed the God of the Old Testament was a dirty bully, what would he then believe of the God of the New Testament? If the God of the New Testament is not like the God of the Old Testament, then there has to be a change in gods. You can't change law without changing God. So what he is saying is that there is a different God in the Old Testament with a different law, and a different God in the New Testament with a different law as well.

Christ Made Under the Law to Fulfill It

We already know that there is only one God. We know that Jesus Christ is God in the flesh. We know that He gave the law. He made

the law because He is God. Yet we are also told that He was made under the law. In Galatians 4, verses 4 and 5: "But when the fullness of time was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons." Why was Jesus Christ made under the law? You will answer, "The Bible says to redeem us who were under the law." That is true. But the next question is, how did He redeem us?

It is not simply that He died as our substitute or that He was our sacrifice. We need more than forgiveness to enter the presence of God. We need not only forgiveness of sins, but absolute, perfect righteousness. The Bible tells us that He was made under the law in order that He might render to that law the personal, perfect, and perpetual obedience that it demanded. In every aspect and every area of the law, Jesus Christ rendered absolute, perfect obedience. That is why, in Isaiah 42:21, referring to the Messiah, the Lord Jesus, the Bible says, "The law is well pleased. For His righteousness sake, He will magnify the law. He will make it honorable."

If Jesus Christ came under the law, obeyed the law, magnified the law, made it honorable, and rendered to it every demand that it required, why would it now become worthless, useless, and abrogated? Why would it be set aside? As Paul said in Romans 7:12, if the law is holy, and the commandment just and good, why would he replace it?

If the law of God was important enough for Jesus Christ to be made under it, important enough for Him to render perfect obedience to it, and important enough to demand the sacrifice of the Son of God—and He willingly submitted Himself and died under the curse and penalty of that broken law—how could anyone now say that it is worthless, useless, or needs to be set aside and nullified?

When you think of the Old Covenant, you think of the Old Testament. When you think of the New Covenant, you think of the New Testament. In fact, the word testament simply means covenant. Do you realize that the Old Covenant spoke of the New Covenant and described a new application and a new emphasis that would be brought to pass by the person and work of Jesus Christ? Let me show you.

Old and New Covenants: Law Written on Hearts

Jeremiah 31, beginning with verse 31, says, “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 break, although I was a husband unto them, saith the Lord.”

Remember, he gave his covenant in the tables of stone. Watch verse 33: “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 I will be their God, and they shall be to me 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. And I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sins no more.”

Jeremiah says there is going to be a new covenant. It will be a different application. That covenant is no longer going to be written in tables of stone; it is going to be written in your heart.

Hebrews chapter 8 practically quotes Jeremiah 31 verbatim. Beginning with verse 10: “For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord. I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts. And I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people. And they shall not teach every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord. For all shall know me, from the least even to the greatest. For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more.”

Hebrews 8:13 says, “...a new covenant he hath made the first old, now that which decayeth and waxeth old is ready to vanish away.” What part is being discussed? If you read Hebrews 8:13 through chapter 9 and verse 14, the subject is the ceremonial law: the rituals and everything to be fulfilled in Jesus Christ.

Hebrews 10:15 makes this clear: “Whereof the Holy Ghost also is a witness to us. For after that, he said before, this is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord. I will put my

laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them, and their sins and iniquities will I remember no more."

Where remission of these is, there is no more offering for sin. We do not continually bring oxen, lambs, and rams for sacrifice. Why? Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God, suffered once and for all. Therefore, Hebrews 10:19 says, "Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which he hath consecrated for us through the veil, that is to say his flesh, and having a high priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering, for he is faithful that promised."

When Hebrews speaks of this, it speaks of a new way into the holiest of all. Under the old covenant, the high priest entered the holiest only once a year, and not without the shedding of blood. The other priests could not enter the holiest, and the people could not enter it or even enter the holy place reserved for the priest. But now, through this new covenant and what Jesus Christ has done, we have boldness to enter the holiest of all. We may freely and fully come to the Lord Jesus Christ. Hebrews 8, 9, and 10 enunciate two main differences between the old covenant and the new covenant.

The first emphasis is that Jesus Christ is the reality. He is the fulfillment of all the Old Testament types, figures, emblems, and shadows. The second is that the law is no longer written on tablets of stone; it is now written in our minds and in our hearts. The Apostle Paul makes this distinction between the Old Covenant and the New Covenant in 2 Corinthians 3.

2 Corinthians 3: The Greater Glory of the New Ministration

In verse 7, he says, "But if the ministration of death," speaking of the law, because no one could keep it or render to it what it demanded, "written and engraven in stones, was glorious," and it was, "so that the children of Israel could not steadfastly behold the face of Moses for the glory of his countenance." Which glory was to be done away? Moses came down from the mount with his face shining, and a veil

had to be placed over it because they could not look upon him. That was the glory, but he says that glory was to be done away with; in other words, it was to be eclipsed by a greater glory.

Verse 8 asks, “How shall not the ministration of the spirit be rather glorious?” If that which Moses did was glorious, that which God the Holy Spirit does is bound to be more glorious. Verse 9 says, “For if the ministration of condemnation,” which would be the law, “be glory, much more doth the ministration of righteousness exceed in glory.” Jesus Christ is the end of righteousness. He is the fulfillment of righteousness. We are not made righteous by our law keeping; we are made righteous by Jesus Christ, who kept the law perfectly.

Then verse 10 says, “For even that which was made glorious,” referring to the Old Covenant, “had no glory in this respect, by reason of the glory that excelleth.” Everything Jesus Christ has done is far greater than anything Moses ever did. Verse 11 concludes, “For if that which is done away was glorious,” referring to certain aspects of the Old Covenant, “much more that which remaineth is glorious.”

There is something that remains that is glorious as well. It was not the law of God that was done away with; it was the glory, and that glory was eclipsed by Jesus Christ. The person and work of Jesus Christ is far greater and far more glorious than all the Old Testament types, emblems, figures, and shadows, because we now have the reality in the Lord Jesus Christ.

But the law was not abrogated. Its glory was eclipsed and done away with by the fulfillment of all those ceremonial laws and rituals by the Lord Jesus Christ. He says in verse 11, “For if that which is done away was glorious, much more that which remaineth is glorious.”

Albert Barnes writes of “the thing that is to remain, that is permanent, abiding, perpetual, that has no principle of decay, and whose characteristic it is that it is everlasting, the gospel,” which is permanent or abiding because it is designed to remain immutable through the remotest ages. Thus, when verse 11 speaks of “much more that which remaineth is glorious,” it is speaking of the gospel

and of the person and work of Jesus Christ in fulfilling all these Old Testament types.

Commentators on the Permanence of the Moral Law

Matthew Poole says, “the strength of his argument dependeth upon this principle, that any durable good is more excellent and glorious than that which is but transitory and for a time. The ministration of the law is done away, the law containing ordinance is itself done away, and therefore the ministration of it must need cease.”

There are now no priests and Levites, no worldly sanctuary, nor any ministrations in it or relating to it. But our Saviour hath told us that His gospel shall be preached to the end of the world, so that the ministration must, according to all the principles of reason, be more glorious, as that which is eternal is more glorious than that which is fluid and vanishing. Thus, that which remains is how Jesus Christ fulfilled the law and the gospel that has been established by the Son of God.

John Gill makes an important distinction. The law is that which is done away—not merely the ceremonial law or the judicial law, but the whole ministry of Moses and particularly the law of the Decalogue. For the better understanding of this, distinguish between the matter and the ministry of it. The ministry of it by Moses is done away; the matter of it, so far as it is of a moral nature, abides. Distinguish also between the law as in the hands of Moses and of Christ. As in the hands of Moses, it is broken to pieces and abolished; as in the hands of Christ, as King of His church, it remains. We must also distinguish between precepts and precepts.

Some are mixed, being partly moral and partly ceremonial, as the fourth and fifth commands. Others are ceremonial or purely related to the Jews while in their civil policy and in the land of Canaan, and are done away. But what is purely moral is, as to the matter of it, still obliging.

We must distinguish between the law as a covenant of works and as a rule of walk and conversation, or conduct. As a covenant of works, it is done away. No man can be saved by the law. As a rule of walk and conduct, it still continues. We must distinguish between

persons: to them that are redeemed from it, it is done away; to them that are under it, it remains. Lastly, distinguish between the right and wrong use of it. Any use of it to justify us before God by our obedience is done away with.

But as it may be of use to convince sinners of sin, and to direct saints in a course of righteousness, so it abides. Once you begin to look at this thing, you have to distinguish between the matter and the manner, the ministry, the precepts, the hands of Moses, and the hands of Christ. So Gill is not trashing the law. He is saying that there is a ministration of it, there is a ministry of it that has been done away with, but the law itself has not been done away with.

Consider Galatians 6:2, because some are going to try to take the law of Christ and make it different from the law of God. The Scripture says, “Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ.” In order to understand verse 2, you must see it in context. “Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault,” that is, you have tripped up, you have been ensnared, you have been caught in something that is sinful and wicked, “ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted. Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ.”

Galatians 6:2 in Context: Love Fulfills the Law

What is the law of Christ in this context? In this context, it is bearing one another's burdens. That would be loving your neighbor as yourself, ministering to the saints of God, and exhibiting what you and I would call brotherly love. In other words, what you have in Galatians 6:1–2 is an application of God's law. It is not a new law, but it is the old law revealed in a new way with the heart and love of Jesus Christ.

Now look at the remote context, Galatians 5:14: “For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.” What is the summary of God's law? Love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul. What is the second? Love thy neighbor as thyself, of course.

We are talking about bearing one another's burdens and so fulfilling the law of Christ. Hebrews 6:10 says, "For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labor of love which you have showed toward His name, in that you have ministered to the saints and do minister." What? God is not unrighteous to forget our love for Him? How do we exhibit our love for Him? By ministering to each other. That is exactly what He is talking about.

Turn back to John 13. Our Lord says in verses 34 and 35, "A new commandment I give unto you, that you love one another, as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this shall all men know that you are my disciples, if you have love one to another." I covered this last week, but I want to point it out again in light of what we are talking about. John 15:12 says, "This is my commandment that you love one another as I have loved you." It is not a new commandment. I am not dealing again with the word "new"; I dealt with that last week. It is not a new commandment in the sense that this is something Jesus Christ is just giving.

Leviticus 19:18 says, "...thou shalt not avenge, nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people, but thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. I am the Lord." So it is "not anew" in the sense that this is something Jesus Christ is just giving. What He is giving is a new application of it, because now we are to love one another as He loved us. How did He love us? He gave Himself for us. John 15:12 continues, "This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." That is how Christ loved us. He laid down His life for us.

You must remember that love in the Bible is the fulfilling of the law. Romans 13:8–10 says plainly, "Love is the fulfilling of the law." What does 1 John 5:3 say? "And this is the love of God that we keep His commandments, and they're not grievous unto us."

Love, according to the Bible, is obedient to God's law. Someone may say, "We're under the law of love," meaning some emotion, feeling, or sentiment. But if love is emotion, sentiment, or feeling, how do you know when you have enough? How do you know when you have fulfilled the law of love? It is impossible to help without a standard. God's law happens to be our standard.

Someone is going to say that the law of Christ is for God's children, meaning we are to love one another. If we are under a new law, and that new law is simply that we love one another, and no one defines love by obedience to God's law, under what standard is God going to judge the wicked? Obviously, they are not going to love the way Christ loved us, nor can they. By what standard would God judge the wicked? I do not know how He could unless He judged them by His law, which He has revealed, and by which they are obligated to go.

Consider Galatians 6 and verse 2: “Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.” John Gill said, “...this is a law or doctrine which Christ has clearly taught, and recovered from the false glosses of the Pharisees. It is His new commandment, which He has strengthened and enforced by His own example in dying for His people, and which He by His Spirit inscribes upon their hearts.” Adam Clarke wrote, “...and so fulfill the law of Christ. That law or commandment, you shall love one another, or that do unto all men as you would have them do unto you, we should be as indulgent to the infirmities of others as we can be consistently with truth and righteousness.”

Our brother's infirmity may be his burden, and if we do not choose to help him bear it, let us not reproach him because he is obliged to carry the load.

Bear ye one another's burdens. In the context, the Bible says, “If a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one.” Let us say that David has fallen into sin; he has become entrapped and ensnared. Gary and I see that, and we go to David and say, “David, we would like to share some things with you from the Word of God. Here is what you are doing, and here is why it is contrary to God, His law, and His Word. Here is how it is hurting you and your family, hurting the testimony, and hurting the church. Here is the remedy, and we want to help you. We want to pray with you and share with you how you can be released.” Is that not loving your brother as yourself? Of course it is. That is exactly what he is talking about in Galatians 6 and verse 2.

Here is Matthew Poole: “The law of Christ, he means the will of Christ, revealed in the Gospel, particularly the law of love, so much

enjoined by Christ, which is not called the law of Christ, because first given by him, for himself maketh it the sum of the ten commandments, but because he receiveth it, and vindicated it from the corruption of the Pharisees, because he so often urged it, and so seriously commanded and commended it to his disciples, and set us the highest precedent and example of it, and hath by his Spirit written it in our hearts."

Matthew Henry writes: "To excite us hereunto the apostle adds by way of motive that so we shall fulfill the law of Christ. That is to act agreeably to the law of his precept, which is the law of love and obliges us to a mutual forbearance and forgiveness, to sympathy with and compassion toward each other. It would also be agreeable to his pattern and example, which have the force of a law to us. He bears with us under our weaknesses and follies. He is touched with a fellow feeling of our infirmities."

Therefore, there is good reason why we should maintain the same temper towards one another. Now, let me mention something to you. I realize I have not researched every Puritan and every scholar that has ever lived. I understand that. But I will tell you this: I have not found one scholar, one Puritan, or one man who has said that the law of Christ is different from the law of God. It cannot possibly be, because Jesus Christ is God, and He gave the law.

The Law of Christ is the Law of God

Look in your Bibles to the book of 1 Corinthians 9 and verse 21. I want you to see what the Apostle Paul said. You have to understand the context. In fact, let us read beginning with verse 19, so you can see the context. Paul says, "For though I be free from all men, yet have I made myself servant unto all, that I might gain them more. And to the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews. To them that are under the law, as under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law. To them that are without law, as without law, being not without law to God, but under the law to Christ, that I might gain them that are without law." The law of God and the law of Christ here are the same.

There are not two laws. There is only one law, given to us now in a new and glorious ministration. Paul said that to them without law,

the heathen, he was without law; that is, he would not fulfill all the ceremonies and rituals of the Pharisees and Jews. But he was not without law to God, being under the law to Christ. As Albert Barnes explained, Paul did not regard himself as absolutely without law or freed from obligation to obey God. He was not a despiser or neglecter of the law as such, but was not bound by the peculiar ceremonial law of Moses.

This is an instance of Paul's conscientiousness. He would not leave room to suppose that he disregarded all law. He was bound to God by law and, in the conduct to which he referred, felt that he was obeying Him. He was bound by a higher law than those ceremonial observances which were now to be done away. This passage destroys all the refuges of the antinomians. Whatever privilege the gospel has introduced, it has not set us free from the restraints and obligations of law. That law is still binding, and no man is at liberty to disregard the moral law of God. Christ came to magnify, strengthen, and honor the law, not to destroy it.

In verse 21, Paul says he was “not without law to God, but under the law to Christ.” Literally, he was “not an outlaw of God, but an in-law of Christ.” The little word en is affixed to the word law, so he says, “I’m not an outlaw, I’m an in-law to Christ,” because Christ is indeed God and has given us His law. Obviously, the law of Christ and the law of God are one and the same.

Matthew Poole said this: “To the Gentiles he behaved himself as if he himself had been a Gentile, that is, forbearing the observances of the Levitical law, to which the Gentiles had never any obligation at all. Yet he did not behave himself as one that had no regard to the law of God that was yet in force and obligatory, but acknowledged himself to be under that, though a servant of Christ, so that he abated nothing of his necessary duty, only denied himself in some things, as to which the law of God had left him a liberty, both to the Jews and Gentiles, propounding to himself the same end to both, that is, the gaining of their souls to Jesus Christ.” No one is saying that the law of Christ is different from the law of God.

The law of God is the law of Christ under the ministration of Christ, who has made it far more glorious than the ministration of Moses. It is not the law that has been done away with; it was the

glory that Moses had that has been done away with. The rituals have been done away with. The law is still the same.

Application: Christ's Superior Glory and Our Response

The true builder has all the honor. “Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus, who was faithful to Him that appointed Him.” Jesus Christ was the faithful One to the Father. He was not in opposition to His Father; He came as a servant of His Father. He was the sent One. He said repeatedly, “I came not to do My will, but I came to do the will of My Father who has sent Me.” He was faithful to Him who appointed Him, as also Moses was faithful in all of his house.

Moses was faithful, but his faithfulness could not reach the apex of the faithfulness of Jesus Christ. “For this man,” that is, Jesus Christ, “was counted worthy of more glory than Moses, inasmuch as he who had built the house hath more honor than the house.”

For every house is built by some man, but he that built all things is God. For Moses verily was faithful in all his house as a servant, for a testimony of those things which were to be spoken after, but Christ as a Son over His own house, whose house we are, if we hold fast to confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end.

Moses built the tabernacle under the direction of God, and Solomon built the temple under the direction of God. But we, according to Ephesians chapter 2, are now the temple of God. We are the house of God. It is not stones any longer; it is living beings. His law is not written in tables of stones but in our hearts.

Jesus Christ, in His ministry, surpassed the glory that Moses had because He gave us His life and His example, and told us to love one another as He has loved us. The law of Christ is the law of God because Jesus Christ is God. There is no difference between the Father and the Son. He said, “The Father and I are one.” One God is revealed in three persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we bow to Thee this day. We thank You for Your Word and for Your truth. Help us, Lord, to think

clearly and to understand. Teach us and build us up in the most holy faith. In Thy name we pray, Amen.

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