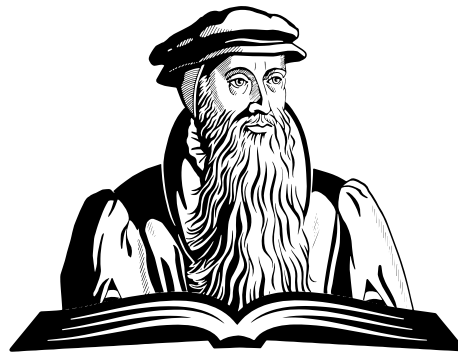

VIDEO LECTURE MODULE: TEN COMMANDMENTS

18 LECTURES

Lecture Presenter: Rev. A.T. Vergunst



The John Knox Institute
of Higher Education

Entrusting our Reformed Inheritance to the Church Worldwide

John Knox Institute of Higher Education

Entrusting our Reformed Inheritance to the Church Worldwide

© 2019 by John Knox Institute of Higher Education

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced in any form or by any means for profit, except in brief quotations for the purposes of review, comment, or scholarship, without written permission from the publisher, John Knox Institute, P.O. Box 19398, Kalamazoo, MI 49019-19398, USA

Unless otherwise indicated all Scripture quotations are from the Authorized King James Version.

Visit our website: www.johnknoxinstitute.org

Rev. A.T. Vergunst is minister of the Gospel and plans to serve the Reformed Congregation of Carterton, New Zealand, June 2020. Currently he serves the Netherlands Reformed Congregation of Waupun, WI, USA.

www.nrcwaupun.org

www.rcnz.org

Module

TEN COMMANDMENTS

18 LECTURES

REV. A.T. VERGUNST

1. Introduction.....	1
2. The God of the Law.....	5
3. Paradise and the Law.....	11
4. Jesus and the Law.....	15
5. The Law and the Sinner.....	19
6. The Law and the Saint.....	24
7. The Law at Mt. Sinai.....	29
8. The First Commandment.....	34
9. The Second Commandment.....	38
10. The Third Commandment.....	43
11. The Fourth Commandment.....	48
12. The Fifth Commandment.....	53
13. The Sixth Commandment.....	58
14. The Seventh Commandment.....	62
15. The Eighth Commandment.....	67
16. The Ninth Commandment.....	72
17. The Tenth Commandment.....	77
18. The Law in Eternity.....	82

Lecture 1

INTRODUCTION

To see the highest mountain of the world is impressive. To fly over a near endless ocean makes you feel small. To peer into the universe of billions of stars is dazzling. Yet, far more inspiring is it to see the glory of Him Who not only made these things out of nothing but also set all in motion according to His divine laws!

In this first module on the Law of God, we will explore what we hope to study in this course on the law of God. Our full and final purpose of these studies is that we would echo the poet's confession in Psalm 119:72, "The law of thy mouth is better unto me than thousands of gold and silver."

TRANSCRIPT LECTURE 1

Dear friends, I hope you have a love for traveling, or at least the love to discover some new aspects of the truth of God's Word, because I plan to take you on a journey of thinking about the glory of God in connection with His holy law. It's been a great pleasure for me to prepare this series of lectures and to discover new aspects of the truth of the law of the Lord, and I hope that I may be able to pass on some of the beauties that I have discovered to you in this series of lectures. We begin today with a story as I met, a couple of years ago, a young woman probably in her mid-30s, a successful, young businesswoman, and as we were talking together she shared her story with me. She grew up in a very religious family. Both her parents were strict adherents to different religions. And so, her words to me were, "I don't want anything to do with religion anymore. I am beyond that."

As I reflected on that thought, I desired to get into a deeper conversation with her, so I asked her, "Do you still believe in God?" "Yes. Yes, I do," she answered, "but I don't want [anything] to do with these rules of God. I've had enough of rules. I want to live my life. I want to have freedom. I want to enjoy my life according to my rules." So in my answer, I tried to sympathize with her. I said, "Yeah, I understand it was not easy for you to grow up with all these rules from both parents from different religions, and to serve a God Who only is do's and don'ts is not very attractive. I must agree with you on that. But, let me just think it through with you a little bit farther. What is now really religion? Is religion keeping rules to somehow please the deity, or to keep him from being angry, or to pacify him? How about you think about religion as a relationship? A relationship with your God, your Creator, your Maker. And, in missing out on that relationship, which we in essence have lost, we are losing the beauty of life. We miss out [on] the joy and satisfaction, the pleasure of living because we are separated from our God. Let me liken it to [a] marriage relationship. A good marriage is not just two people living together, keeping the rules. A good marriage is two people who love each other, who honor each other, who respect each other, who live in a tender, close, intimate, harmonious, growing relationship. However, to keep that relationship in that quality, we are to honor the rules of the relationship. There are some guidelines,

some rules, some expectations, some do's, some don'ts to keep the relationship healthy and beautiful. It will blossom in that context."

Now, I want to use this story as our starting point for our series [of] lectures on God's law, and my purpose in this study is to show you the glory of our God as He has revealed it in the law that He has given to us. Today's lecture, consider it as a bird's eye view over the entire length of this series of lectures, perhaps a little appetizer. So, where do we begin? Let me begin with this question, what do you think about when you think about the glory of God? What comes to your mind? Undoubtedly, some of you are thinking creation, the universe, the majestic beauty of all that God has created. I agree. That's a beautiful aspect of God's glory. Maybe somebody else thought the gospel, that incredible story of the love of God that He didn't spare His own Son but gave Him for rebels. I agree. It is a story of God's glory that exceeds the beauty of creation.

However, let me suggest another answer about the law, the holy law of God. Perhaps you must admit that that didn't come naturally to our mind when we think about the glory of God, and yet the truth is that the glory of God is also beautifully revealed in the law that He has given to us, stronger yet. Before the creation was the law of God. Even before the announcement of the gospel of Jesus Christ was the law of God. God has always been God Who existed in a relationship as a Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and in that relationship, They were governed by Their own law of how to keep also Their relationship in the harmony, in the beauty, in the intimacy, in the honoring and respecting and loving of One Another. Now, that's an important truth to capture, friends. As we go forward in our journey, let's hold onto this basic foundational statement, that the glory of God is shown in the law, because that already will help us to answer, perhaps, the question, "Are the law and the gospel opposite, or are they together complementary?" or the other question that often Christians struggle with around us is, "Is the law Old Testament material, and therefore not relevant to us today in the New Testament?"

You'll notice that a number of Christians around us hold the view that the law of God is no more important. It's all about love today, not about law. And therefore, rarely do churches teach a course as we are going to explore together about the law of God and especially the Ten Commandments. That direction of neglecting the law of God is neither healthy, nor is it scriptural. Why is it not healthy? Well, think of your own body. No exercise, no good diet, what does it do to us physically? It makes us flabby, fat, unhealthy. Now think of spiritually, if we are cutting out the instruction of the law of God, the moral qualities of our life, we become Christians that are morally flabby, fat, unhealthy, and more, un-Christlike. It's also not scriptural to cut out teaching on the law because listen to Jesus. In John 13:34, He says, "A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another." So, love. But in John 14:15, He adds, "If ye love me, keep my commandments." So, you notice that the Savior emphasizes love and law, commandments, nearly in the same context of those chapters.

So, let's get this bird off the ground, let's see where we go in this series on the law of God. What is it that we want to cover? So, the first question I struggled with and have to share with you is, "Where do we start? I am the teacher, of course, on the law of God, the 10 Commandments. Where do we start? It seems logical to go to Exodus 20 and to listen to the thunder of the voice of God on Mount Sinai, but is that the point to start? Or, shall we start perhaps in Genesis 1:1, where the Bible starts? I propose neither as our starting points. I propose that we go to John 1:1. Let me read that to you. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." In these few words, John sketches a reality, friends, that is beyond words. He points us to the relationship of God. The words "and the Word was with God" in the Greek [have] a suggestion that They were face-to-face with Each Other, communion, fellowship, living together in this holy Trinity from all eternity already; and God dwelled together in this sweet communion, living according to His own holy standards. So, I have chosen to begin our teaching on the law of God with first looking at the God of the law.

So before we analyze the law, let's focus our thoughts on the Lawgiver Himself, and then move to see what He is saying to us in His holy law. Thinking about that perhaps brings us also to answer some of the questions of "what now really is the function of law?" and "was the law of God a gift to us, or is it God's will to make us behave the right way?" or "is the law given to hinder my freedom, or is it, on the other hand, given to protect my freedom?" So, that's our first stopping place: the God of the law.

What next? Well, we open up to Exodus 20. It seems logical. Well, that's clearly where God's law and the 10 Commandments [are] stated explicitly. However, if we jumped all the way to Exodus 20, realize we are skipping

2500 to 3000 years of history of the world already. So, what about the law of God in that period of time? Therefore, I propose that we go back to Paradise, and our topic will be Adam, the first Adam, and the law of God. And so, as we think about Adam and Eve, what law did they have? Did they know the 10 Commandments? And if they did, how did they know the 10 Commandments? And if they didn't, what law did they live by? For that will be our second stopping place, the law in relationship to Adam and Eve in Paradise.

After that, I propose that we are going to seek to understand the law in relationship to the last Adam: Jesus Christ. We all know from the gospel story that Jesus Christ honored the law as no human ever did. He came not to destroy the law, He says, but to fulfill the law (Matthew 5:17). So, it seems to be for us the best exposition of the law of God to study briefly the relationship between Jesus Christ, the last Adam, and the law of God. So, let's think about questions. How did Jesus honor the law? And what is that relationship between Him and the gospel that He preached? And certainly, we come then for a moment to the question, already, "since the Savior took the curse as the suffering Savior, did He then also cancel the law for His followers, since He took the curse?"

Next, let me take you to consider the law in relationship to us sinners. Jesus dealt much with the Pharisees in His ministry on earth, and you understand that the Pharisees were people who were erring [in] their thoughts [on] how to be saved. Their main thought was that by law-keeping, we will be saved. So in a certain way, they thought too much of law-keeping as a sinner in relationship to God. And that error, of course, is still very much around in our heart, and therefore it is good for us all to stop together to consider, "what is the relationship of the law to the sinner?" And questions I will try to answer [in] this study [are] "how does the law of God function in our hearts by the ministry of the Holy Spirit in the unregenerate state? How does the Holy Spirit use the law to convict and to bring us to the gospel?"

And then, we will certainly deal with the error of legalism. From that point, let's consider the law in connection to *saint*. After someone is saved, the Scripture refers to him or her as a saint. We would love to think that once a person has come to faith and has experienced God's grace all issues of sin [are] over, but we know that is not the case. Reality proves that the struggle and the wrestling with sin remain a struggle for all God's children. So, let's imagine for a moment salvation to be that narrow path that Jesus refers to (Matthew 7:14), but let's picture that narrow path on a ledge, on a ledge with steep sides to the left and to the right. We can fall on either side as we're trying to walk that ledge. We can fall on the side of legalism, which is making too much of law-keeping as if that is helping us to be saved, but we can also fall upon the left side. We refer to that as *antinomianism*, and those are the ones who say, "Ah, we do not have to at all worry about the law of God. We are no more under the law for we are under grace, as Romans 6:14 says." So, the question indeed is: Does a believer still have to be concerned about law-keeping, or are we simply saying like Romans 13:8 suggests, 'owe no man any thing, but to love one another: for he that loveth another has fulfilled the law? So, it's only about love, no more about law.

Finally, after this, we are going to head out to Mount Sinai. Exodus 20 records an event that doesn't have its equal within any part of the Scripture. God revealed Himself in the majesty that did not only make all of Israel tremble, [but] even Moses said, "I exceedingly tremble" when he saw the glory of the majesty of God. Now to understand Exodus 20, please begin to read and meditate already in your mind on the following questions, before we even get there. For example, what's the context of Exodus 20? There are chapters before it that will help us to understand why Exodus 20 is in Exodus 20, why God gave the law at that moment in the history of Israel. So, think about that. A certain question that also is important to think about is: Now why did God choose to reveal Himself in such an awesome majesty? Why this display of power and thunder and lightning when He reveals and speaks the law of God from the mountain? And what is the meaning of that preamble, "I am the Lord thy God which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt?" Is that more than an historical statement? Is there more in that than just a reference to what has taken place? Obviously, we are going to stick around Mount Sinai for a little while because each of the 10 Commandments we will examine in a separate lecture, so that will be at least 10 lectures.

As a picture, consider the 10 Commandments as a building, God's building. Each commandment is an essential part of this building. In other words, all ten belong together. None can be taken out. If we take any of those ten out, that would not only weaken the entire structure of the building, it [would] also dishonor the Builder, as if He added too much. Besides, also none can be added. That [would] again mean that the Builder had designed the law of God poorly and would have to add something to it. So the ten, they all belong together.

A couple of questions to guide us on each of the commandments already, and that is what we will further explore, [are] why did God state nearly all of them, nine of them, in the negative, “thou shalt not”? Why? Why this negative starting point on each one of the commandments? Secondly, the question we can ask is this: David writes that the law is exceedingly broad; Paul writes that the law is spiritual. So, is there more to the surface of the law? And we already know the answer: Jesus Himself expounds the law on the Sermon on the Mount, and He shows us that “Thou shalt not kill” is far more than literally murdering your neighbor. So, we need to go and look at each commandment in a spiritual way and what it means. And of course, as we study the ten, we hope to make many applications to our daily lives as we are to live before God and men.

And then, before we end our study, I ask you to join me one more time on the subject “the law and eternity.” We notice that the law did not begin at Sinai. We also notice that the law did not begin at Paradise. The law of God, as you’ll see in our second lecture, begins with God. So, then the question is, “what will the status of the law be?” In the new world Jesus will create upon the final judgment of the earth, will God’s law have a permanent feature or authority in that new world? Will the redeemed humanity honor the same 10 Commandments that were given on Mount Sinai? Undoubtedly, many aspects of the new world remain hidden for us, but perhaps it’s possible for us to establish a few guidelines or principles on the question whether the law of God will be considered in eternity as the same law that we have now in the holy Scriptures.

So, friends, it’s time for me to land this bird, as we’ve explored this journey from the bird’s eye view, and become the worm and to begin to look at these aspects in slow, searching, thinking-through topic by topic. And, I hope that as we dig out the details of the glories of God that you also find this to be a subject that will fill us more and more with admiration and joy in the God of the law. Let me remind you in closing, our main purpose here is not to increase knowledge. The main purpose is to increase devotion. How wonderful if the end result will be that we join David on a deeper and more personal level as he says in Psalm 19, in the celebration of the law of God, “the law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple. The statutes of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes. The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever: the judgments of the LORD are true and righteous altogether.” And then, he comes to this amazing confession, “more to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold: sweeter also than honey and honeycomb. Moreover by them is thy servant warned: and in keeping of them there is great reward.” So, may God bless these words and make us a source of blessing to others. Thank you.

Lecture 2

THE GOD OF THE LAW

From our earliest childhood days, we resist someone else's will when it counters ours. This internal attitude doesn't change by getting older for we don't like to be subject to the laws of God and men and neither can be. Do you still feel this way? Do you still look at the law as the lists of things you are forbidden or commanded, hindering your freedom to soar or explore?

In this second module we will be challenged to review this view of God's law. As often, discovering new aspects of a familiar truth may lead to deeper appreciation and admiration of what is truly beautiful.

TRANSCRIPT LECTURE 2

Welcome, dear friends, to our second lecture on the law of God. It's always exciting to go on a new journey, and [there're] ways for you and me to increase our excitement of discovering new territory. Imagine two people walking through the forest. The one is just taking in the sights, enjoying the sounds and the smell. The other one next to him, he's also enjoying it, but as he hears the sound, he knows what [bird] it is. When he looks at the plants, he [knows] what plant it is. He looks at the geological features, and he knows what this is all about. The second person will enjoy the journey much more. So, I encourage you to go back, occasionally perhaps, to the first lecture and to think about the questions I ask about every stopping place in the journey we hope to consider. It would be good if you pre-meditate on these questions to prepare yourself somewhat for the subject we're looking at.

Now, a second advice is from the book of Proverbs. Proverbs 12:27 says, "The slothful man roasteth not that which he took in hunting: but the substance of the diligent man is precious." Often times we lose the great benefit of listening to a lecture or a sermon or a personal reading when we don't do something with what we have collected, just as this proverb speaks about a hunter who fails to roast the animal that he hunted. It will rot. It will do no good. So, please be encouraged to take the lecture a little farther than what you have just heard and go back to the Scriptures, meditate, speak, discuss with each other about what you have heard.

Well, let's turn to our topic of today and let us begin with listening to David. In various places in the Psalms, he says wonderful things about the law. At one point he says they're 'more to be desired than fine gold, yea than honey from the honeycomb' (Psalm 19:10). He has a very elevated view of the law of God. Let's ask ourselves honestly, Does that echo your and my feelings, appreciation, admiration, love for the law of God? Can we sing honestly, "Oh, how love I thy law," as he does in one of the psalms (Psalm 119:97)? Maybe you're like me, at least many years ago.

I wondered what I was missing. I was wondering where I was going wrong. What is so delightful about the do's and don'ts of the law? Why love a law that seems to limit your freedom? I mean, didn't David feel in his own

heart that prick in his conscience that the law would always give a sinner? Didn't David have sometimes a feeling he wanted to overreach to what was forbidden? Well, we know he did, and we know he felt, and we know from the psalms that he had the same struggles as we do because sometimes he asked, "Lord, turn my eyes away from vanity and incline my heart to the testimony of thy law" (Psalm 119:36-37). So we know he was also having those struggles, and yet he says, "Oh, how love I thy law! It is my meditation day and night." How do we answer this? Why did David have this so high esteem of the law of God? The reason is that David relished the law of God because he knew and loved the God of the law.

Friends, the law is much more [than] about a list of do's and don'ts, a list of commandments and boundaries. The law is about God. The law tells me about the lawgiver. We often overlook that before there is a law, there is a lawgiver. And now even worse, of course, in the situation that we are today with our blinded eyes spiritually in our fallenness, we look at the law negatively, and we consider the lawgiver negatively. And that's why today we start this lecture by looking closely first at the lawgiver before we consider the law. So, let's be honest. When we think about God's law, we feel unease. We may feel a certain fright or conviction. We may have the tremor that we feel when a law authority man, police, judge is after us, or we may feel a restraining power that we resent or that we resist or worse that we rebel against. And, that's because we feel that the law hinders. The law restricts. And do you see what happens next?

When we consider the law that way, we make the application about the lawgiver. He must be harsh. He must be unjust. He must just do this because He likes to. He is somewhat against me. And you know, the reason that that is is what Paul sums up for us in Romans 8:7-8. Let me read that. He says, "The carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God." In our fallen state, we have a completely twisted, warped understanding of the law and of the lawgiver.

If you're an older person listening to me today, do you remember how you used to think about your parents when you were young? Those curfews, those family rules, those house rules, those boundaries, those things that they imposed upon us? We all perhaps had somewhat of a negative feeling about these parents until we're older, and now we appreciate it. Now we look back, and the same rules that were then in place we now do appreciate. And why? Because now we understand, as we've grown up, that behind these family rules, there was a devotional love of a mom and a dad who want to protect us, who want to provide us with a safe, healthy, joyful living environment. That is my hope that as we look today at the lawgiver that you and I also would have deeper understanding and appreciation for the law of God, and that we will join Paul in Romans 7:12 when he says, "Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment is holy, and just, and good."

So, I invite you to join me in thinking about three questions today. First, Who is our lawgiver? Second, what is the relationship of God to the law? And thirdly, what is the intent? The first is going to take most of our time. The second and the third, really, will be much easier to answer once we have looked at the first one in detail. So, Who is the lawgiver? Let's think about four things in our lawgiver.

The first one [is that] our lawgiver is love. Notice, I didn't say that our lawgiver is the greatest lover. That's also true, but I said, "He is love." I John 4:16 informs us that God is love. Yes, He's loving, but He *is* love. Someone who is a lover can become a hater, but that's not possible with God. His character, His being *is* love, unchanging. God's love didn't begin when He started to create the universe. God's love has been eternal. Far before time, He existed as a Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in a loving relationship.

In the essence of love, They communed. The sacred Three loved Each Other absolutely, purely, exclusively. [They] intensely devoted Themselves to Each Other, and They dwelt in that sweet communion with Each Other in a divine-size love, a relationship of love. And They honored Each Other, and They served Each Other, They glorified Each Other in that relationship. And how do we know that? Well, we know that from the Scriptures because in the Scriptures Each Person honors, Each Person glorifies the Others. And They do that because there is love in the Godhead.

So, ponder about this: love is the essential attribute of God around which all other attributes revolve like planets around the sun. It's a poor picture, but it's a picture nonetheless to try for us to visualize God in His essence: love. Some of our theologians in days gone by have defined God's love in His other attributes. That means His other attributes, His moral ones particularly, are an expression of His love. Think of it this way. His omnipotence is the action of love, the power of love. His omniscience is the eye of love. His omnipresence is the presence of

love. His justice is the impartiality and the execution of love. God's anger, often seen as a negative attribute—it's very positive—is the jealousy of His love. Wisdom [is] the counsel of love. Truth [is] the faithfulness of love. And then, we come yet to the word *holiness*, and I will take a little more time to define that. [Holiness] is also an expression of the essential glory of God's love.

So, let's take away this: our lawgiver, Who wrote the laws, Who revealed them to us, is a God of essential love. So, He did not just give us arbitrary rules to live by simply because He wants it so. Rather, He gave us His laws so that by observing them, we would enjoy the joy of our relationship with Him and with each other as He is enjoying, in a divine way, the relationship between Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Our lawgiver is love.

The second thing, our lawgiver is holy. Now, holy is the attribute of beauty. *Worship God in the beauty of holiness* is an often recurring phrase and description. Holiness is the attribute that is as a shine on all the other attributes. It is holiness that is the beauty of God. What is holiness, and how does that reveal itself in the holy law of God? Now, usually we approach holiness from a negative viewpoint. It is without sin. It is no sinfulness. It is sinlessness. And good—that is what it is. Holiness is God's total separation from sin, from any defect, any flaw as we know as creatures today, as sinners, [that] we have. So in holiness, God stands infinitely apart from all of us and even from His creation. That's His beauty. That's His astonishing beauty as He reveals Himself, and obviously then God's law deals with purity. God's law deals with living in obedience of heart and of head and of deed and of word.

Yet, there's something more to holiness than sinless perfection. Forefathers have described holiness as the intensity of God's love. The intensity of the love of God is His holiness. And to understand that, let me take you for a moment to Isaiah 6:1, 2, and 3. If you have your Bibles, find it and read along with me. In that passage, Isaiah sees a vision of the angels, seraphims, surrounding the throne of the Lord. They are singing to each other, "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD." Isaiah receives a glimpse of that so sacred scene in the heavens. Now notice how this vision affected Isaiah.

All of the sudden, this prophet cries out, "Woe is me! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips." And why does he feel this way? Because his eyes have seen the King in His glory, the Lord of hosts. What did he feel unclean about? His lips. What about his lips? What do you do with those lips? You go read chapter 5. He preached a sermon. He feels unclean about that all of a sudden. Hold on to that thought for a moment. Let's look at the angels.

What do the angels say when they stand in that same presence of God, even closer than Isaiah ever is? They do not call "Woe is us." Obviously not because they're not sinful. They're perfect beings. But yet, what do they do? They cover themselves in the presence of God with two of their wings. Now what is the purpose that they cover themselves? Perhaps they were ashamed. Perhaps what they see is too intense. What did they see? Well, let's listen to what they say: "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD." And then they say, "The whole earth is filled with the glory of the Lord," the whole earth.

What was Isaiah's earth like at that moment? That was a scene sickening, a world of rebellion, a world of violence and hatred and disdain and unthankfulness, and that wasn't only the world around Israel. It was Israel too! And what did the angels see? What is God doing? He is devoting Himself to this world. The whole earth is filled with the glory of the Lord. What glory? The glory of the love, the devotion. He's maintaining the place, and He is unfolding—What?—the devotion of His love. And the book of Isaiah introduces to us how far that devotion goes when the servant of the Lord is come out of the book pages, the Jehovah Himself come to this earth. What a glory!

Remember Isaiah felt unclean about preaching. Why? Well you read chapter 5. He had just preached six times "Woe" to the people of Israel. Maybe he didn't do it with the devotion of love that he should have. Maybe there was more anger in his message than there was love motivating it. Now he feels unclean. When he sees this devotional love of God, he feels unclean. Holiness, friends, is the devotion of God's love and this description of holiness as the intensity of God's love is supported by Jesus's words in Matthew 22:35–40. He gets to answer a lawyer who challenges Him to give him the greatest commandment.

And Jesus indeed answers that there is none greater than the other. They're all great. They're all the same. The whole summary of the holy law is love. Love God and love your neighbor. No, not just love God. Love God with

all devotional intensity, with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind. Don't just love your neighbor. Love your neighbor with all the intensity, love him as you love yourself.

In John 13:34–35, Jesus deepens that one step further. Listen to how He put that: “A new commandment I give unto you, That you love one another.” Is that so new? Wasn't that Old Testament? Yeah, the new part of that is this, “as *I* have loved you, so that ye love one another.” That's new. That degree, that level of devotion, that intensity of love, now that is holiness, the devotion, intense devotion, of the love of God. Isn't that beautiful? Doesn't this shed a totally different view on the law of God? Let me go on to a third aspect of the lawgiver.

Our lawgiver is sovereign. Many of us have a bad taste about the word *sovereignty*. It's one of the attributes that we, fallen man, have the most difficulty with. To accept and submit to the sovereignty of God, we think it is harsh or perhaps selfish, or we think maybe dictatorial. But, that's a totally unworthy presentation of God's sovereignty. For sure, God's sovereignty means He has all the authority to command as He pleases to command. He has that divine right to legislate whatever serves His interest and whatever carries out His decree. He has a totally divine right to require a total submission of us to Him.

Yet, friends, never interpret the lawgiver's sovereignty in isolation to His other attributes. That would be fearful. When we read the history of our world, we know we've had many people who were sovereigns, who had a divine right, so-called, who abused their authority, who used their sovereign power to serve themselves at the expense of their subjects. That is true. That's horrid, but that is not what our sovereign lawgiver ever has been like. You must never separate the sovereignty of our lawgiver from His other attributes: goodness, justice, love, holiness. They're always together. And therefore, this sovereign lawgiver didn't make His laws just because He loves making laws.

In His sovereignty, He established sovereign laws to make our living environment as much like His: orderly, beautiful, relational, holy, loving. As we think about the sovereign laws in nature, gravity, magnetism, the migration of the birds, the seasonal changes, the rotational and the revolution of the earth, those are sovereign laws that He put in nature all to make this a beautiful living place. So look at the moral laws of God, all put in place to make our living environment as happy and beautiful as His. That brings me to my last point about the lawgiver.

Our lawgiver is just, righteous, fair. His laws are just laws, good laws. Again, this attribute is usually experienced as a negative attribute because, of course, of our innate sinfulness that we have, and we are sinners, and we must face a just God, and that creates a certain sense of unease and conviction. But, is God's justice negative? No. It's a gloriously positive attribute. God's justice is a comforting attribute. Read through the psalms. Take Psalm 18 once, and read through it and see how David found comfort in God's justice that He would do [righteously]. He is pursued by Saul, accused and slandered of things he's never done. He has no power to defend himself or to vindicate himself, but he commits it to the just God Who will judge righteously. He knows he can count on God.

In my pastoral ministry, friends, I often may lead those who've been suffering, oppressed, who [have] been dealt with falsely, to the comfort of the justice of God, that there comes a day that the Judge of heaven and earth will do right when He makes all things right. We can count on God. He keeps His laws. He doesn't stand above His laws. He lives and rules and reigns according to His own laws. Listen to II Chronicles 19:7, “There is no iniquity with the LORD our God, nor respect of persons, nor taking of gifts.” He's not to be bribed. He doesn't show favoritism. He always stays with the laws He made.

Now, the most vivid example of that is when we think about Golgotha, where Jesus Christ, His only beloved Son, hangs suffering under the wrath of God. He did not withhold from Him one drop. That's how just, how inflexible, how fair, His justice is. How great is our lawgiver? Loving? No. Love. Holy, sovereign, and just. And if you agree with me that that is the great glory of our lawgiver, then if we experience His law as negative or as limiting or prohibiting, then the problem is with us, not with the lawgiver, and not with His law. His law is just, good, and powerful.

Now that brings me to the second. What is the law in relationship to God Himself? We don't have to spend much time on this. The law is the mirror, or the reflection, of God Himself. We're all familiar with that thought when we think about creation. Creation mirrors, reflects, the glory of God in a physical and material way. We see His wisdom, His power, His goodness in the earth around us and in every detail of the universe in which we live. Think of Paul's words in Romans 1:20, “For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and his Godhead; so that they are without excuse.” So we see God's glory reflected materially, physically, in creation. So it is with the law.

The law reflects the glory of our Creator in a moral and an ethical way. It's His mirror of Who He is. It reflects God's love, holiness, goodness, righteousness, justice in the moral and ethical reflection that we see in the law of God. Therefore, we can think of the law as the transcript of God's very being, the mirror of His glorious being, and David indeed saw that when he writes in Psalm 19 about the law of the Lord. Notice the words he uses: perfect, pure, sure, right, true, righteous. All of them are descriptive of the glory of God, and since love is the essential glory of God, therefore the whole law is summed up in love. As Paul writes in Romans 13:10, "For therefore love is the fulfilling of the law." However, a mirror has limits.

Consider looking at me, you next to me, we both look at the mirror. You see yourself, and you see me. What you don't see of me is my inside, my motives, my thoughts, what lies behind the outward appearance. So, the mirror is a limited reflection. So it is also with God's law. There's infinitely more to God than what He has revealed to us in the law of the 10 Commandments. That infinitely more is revealed to us in the Lord Jesus Christ. Let's listen to what John observes in John 1:18, "No man has seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he has declared him." So only when we see the fullness of Christ and the life and walk and words visual in the person of Jesus Christ, will we see the fullness of God.

And that then answers the question that we asked in our first lecture. Are the law and the gospel opposite? They're not opposite. They're complemented. The gospel doesn't cancel the law. It's better to say that the gospel expounds the law in a depth I would have never known. Listen to how Paul puts it, "Scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth his love toward us that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:7). Or John 3:16, "God so loved the world." That little word *so* that sums up the entire fullness of God in the smallest word in the Bible, *so loved*. The law is expounded in the gospel. How far did the devotional love of this holy God go? That He spared not His only begotten Son. That is the lawgiver. Now, the law is also God's revelation of His will for us.

Besides the mirror, let's think of the image of the ruler. God dictates in the law His will for us. The lawgiver and the lawmaker has not only determined the physical laws of the world by which we are to live (and if we don't honor those we get sick, we get hurt, we get accidents), but He has also determined the moral laws of our living environments as the rule for us to live by. And again, the absolute right as the moral governor of heaven and earth is not to be disputed. God says in Deuteronomy 10:14, "Behold, the heaven and the heavens of heavens is the LORD's thy God, the earth also, and all that therein is." In Genesis 17:1, God speaks to Abram. He says, "Abram, I am the Almighty God; walk before me. Be thou perfect." So, friends, there [are] none of us that can dispute that the natural laws have stood unchanged since the beginning of the world. God does not change any of those natural laws that rule the creation. Would it be different with God's moral laws?

The laws that stipulate for us the will, His will, for how we are to live, would they have changed over time? The laws that speak about our relationship to Him or our relationship to each other, have they changed? No. We know that God's moral law was carved into stone with His own finger. You know that's the only portion of Scripture that God did not allow anyone else to write first. He wrote it with His own finger in stone. What would the significance of that be? That means indeed that this is a symbolic act by which God has said, "These don't change." And now you know why they won't change. If the law is a reflection of our lawgiver, [then] if laws change our lawgiver must change. And He's eternal, the unchangeable. His law, therefore, is always unchanging.

I have to admit before I saw God as negative, restrictive, and prohibitive. Now I see them as reflective of Himself, and this is a beautiful thought for you and me to meditate further on. Do you know that God doesn't require from us anything different than what is according to His own character? He lives by His own standards of love. He lives by His own devotional love. So, what He commands us is merely a reflection of what He does Himself. Think of that. God requires that we love our enemies. Why? If you do, you reflect Him for He loves His enemies. If God requires us to overcome evil with good, why? Because He overcomes evil with good. We are to reflect Him as we live out the glory of His law. And Jesus's teaching supports that: "Be ye therefore perfect as your Father which is in heaven is perfect" (Matthew 5:48). Or, Luke 6, "Be ye therefore merciful as your Father which is in heaven is merciful" (verse 36). That brings me to my last question. Why did God give us His law?

I don't think that this question is hard to answer anymore. After having looked at the lawgiver, having looked at the reflection of the law as God's reflection, then the answer on this third question is simple. He published the law to promote and to protect our happiness. His laws are not just arbitrary rules by which He says, "You live like

this because I say so.’ As the great parent of the universe, God sets out His laws to protect us and to provide us the best living environment possible. Those laws were not given to protect Himself, friends. God does not have to secure His position with issuing laws like other, maybe earthly, rulers have to do. He as the Almighty is seated on the throne. No one causes Him stress or fear like earthly rulers will have to encounter, and therefore perhaps publish various laws. No one can invade or destroy God and His divine realm of ruling. No, instead He has put the laws in stone to protect the gifts He’s given us.

Consider laws as the boundaries of God. Consider the law of God as the loving fence that a mom and dad put around the yard to protect the children playing in the yard, to protect them from the strangers outside, and to protect them from wandering out into the dangers. Those fences are His protection. They are meant to increase our happiness. Just as those little children will understand and feel that law as limiting, that fence as limiting, and feel that fence as inhibiting them to go beyond, so we think of the law. But, perish that thought. Begin to think of God’s law [positively], His way of protecting us, maintaining us, and maintaining the quality of our relationship with Him, our relationship with others, our relationship with the world around us.

That’s all really very beautifully summed up in one verse of Proverbs. Proverbs 13:14 says, “The law of the wise is a fountain of life, to depart from the snares of death.” So God’s law, God’s Torah, God’s instruction, is the law of wisdom which ends up to be a fountain of life for us to depart from the snares of death. And how beautifully this can be seen, for example, in the first books of Moses. I’m sure the people in Moses’s days didn’t quite understand why they could not eat those animals, only the clean ones, and why that they had to wash their clothes, and why that they could not eat the food upon which they found a dead mouse or dead rat, and they *could* use the seed to sow but *not* to bake bread. They probably didn’t understand lots of those laws, but we do today. Why? Well, because we know today that there are bacteria and viruses. We didn’t discover that till maybe 300 years ago. They didn’t know, but the lawgiver did, and so He created all these laws to protect His people. Love, devotional love, [is] expressed in the law.

Our lawgiver is great. We begin to see why David says, “Thy law is better than thousands of gold and silver” (Psalm 119:72). All the gold and silver can’t buy you happiness, cannot open the door to the heart of God. But that is possible only when we honor the law of God. Sadly, we didn’t. But that’s where we’re going to take up the story of the law next week, the Lord willing. Thank you.

Lecture 3

PARADISE AND THE LAW

No words can picture the beauty and joy Adam and Eve experienced in Paradise. But likewise, no words can describe the destruction caused by the rebellion of Adam and Eve against God. It has ruptured the core of our being and distorted every view of God and ourselves as well as of God's law. This fall of mankind was no accidental slip. It was the conscious and wicked rejection of God's holy and perfect law. But did Adam and Eve then know the Ten Commandments as we now have them? How did they know God's law? These questions will be explored in this third module about the Law of God.

TRANSCRIPT LECTURE 3

Dear friends, what do you think of this statement? *To sin is to give God a slap in His face.* When I was young and I heard that statement, I felt that was a rather strong expression of defining sin. Yet, that has changed after I have explored the relationship between God and the law, and we have seen that they are inseparable. The law of God is the reflection of His very personhood, of Who He is, and therefore any transgression of His law is a personal disdain and dishonoring of His person. And therefore, think again. That statement in itself, though it is a little bit matter-of-fact, has a very good definition to it. Therefore, all sin is serious. All sin is offensive and grievous because it dishonors our great, majestic lawgiver in Who He essentially is. There is therefore no sin that you could define as a small sin, and Jesus brings this out very clearly in the Sermon on the Mount when He defines the commandments in a degree that was astonishing to his hearers. "Thou shalt not kill" is not just "you shall not murder," but "thou shalt not kill" also means you don't belittle someone by crushing his spirits and by spitting out angry words that destroy the person's mindset. So, the reverse is also true.

The reverse is that the smallest acts of devotional love are God-glorifying. If you take a street sweeper in a large city who daily, joyfully and faithfully, does his or her task in sweeping the streets, and he or she does it in a devotion to his neighbor's good, out of a heart full of love, then he is glorifying God in that simple act because he's honoring the person Who has given us the law. God looks at the heart. He looks at the motive. He looks at the purpose that moves the hand or that feeds the tongue. That is to Him the essential of law-keeping.

Today, we will take our thoughts to the law in the context of Paradise, the law in relationship to Adam and Eve. So, as we look at this subject, there are a couple questions that we could ask. What is the knowledge of the law as we know it? To Adam and Eve? To what level, to what extent, did they know the 10 Commandments as we know [them]? Or was the law for them limited to, well, 'be fruitful and multiply; dress the garden; replenish the earth; subdue, or fulfill, and develop it; or don't eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil'? Or, was there more to their law knowledge than those few direct commandments that they have received? Was the law of God written on their hearts?

Now, to explore that question, let's make a quick mental trip to Athens, Mars Hill. Today on the Mars Hill, you can still see the magnificent remnants of the temple [that] Paul stood next to when he preached a sermon, the Areopagus. Now from an architectural viewpoint, this temple building was a magnificent accomplishment. Today, it's a ruin. Why this detour? From the ruins today, we can see something of the glory of the past. That's with that temple. That's also with you and me. Let's apply that principle to the question about Adam and Eve and the law of God.

When we look at men today, we look at the ruin of what we once were. We all know we don't live in Paradise. Open a newspaper or open a news site, and we hear every day the report of the factual evidences of what went wrong in Genesis 3 when mankind rebelled against the law of God. Men kill, steal, break promises, commit adultery, curse God, and die every day. And yet, though this world is in a terrible condition, it's still not hell. There are still many good and kind people in this world doing nice, beautiful things, even non-Christians, even those who don't know the Bible. Even those who do not have any relationship to God often live by *ought to*, or *I should do*, or even to a certain extent *I want to do good*. Where does that come from?

When we listen to the apostle Paul in Romans 2:14–15, he also noticed that non-Christian who don't know the law of God, never heard any part of the revealed will of God, yet are living with a sense of right and wrong, honor and dishonor. They have a conscience that is accusing them or excusing them. Sure, it's distorted. Sure, it is inconsistent. Yet, the ruins of today are a little clue about the glorious beauty of the past. So, what was the point in our human history that we weren't ruins, that we had a perfect knowledge, that we did reflect the law of God in perfection, without flaw?

Now clearly, in your Scriptures, that is before Genesis chapter 3, when we look at Genesis 1 and 2 in the picture that God there paints of Adam and Eve in Paradise. Let's turn to Genesis 1:26–27. We are described there by the author of Genesis as having been made in the likeness or the image of God. Let me read it, "And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: . . . So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them." We are the crowning piece of God's creative work. We are unique. We were preceded by divine counsel, and we of all the creation were reflective of God's image.

So, what does that mean that we are created in His image and in His likeness? That means we are divinely designed to reflect or to mirror something of our Creator. Since God is a Spirit, therefore it's not our physical being that is in itself reflective of God's glory as the Creator. That's also clear from the fact that both male and female are made in the same image of God, and physically we are distinct, yet we bear the same image. So then, what is that image? What is that likeness of God in us? Simply, friends, we reflected God's character, [His] nature. In every aspect of our personhood, we reflected His law.

That's a deep thought that we need to capture. Adam and Eve were made in the image of God. Our spirituality, our morality, our rationality, our creativity, our ability to relate to God and to others all reflected devotional love in beautiful perfection. So, what were Adam and Eve then specifically like before they fell morally and ethically? That is now only the aspect I want to highlight in this lecture about the law.

Now, I can learn more details about Adam and Eve from the New Testament, in which the new creature is described in the apostle Paul's writings to the Ephesians and Colossians. Let me quote from Ephesians 4:24 and Colossians 3:10. "And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness" (Eph. 4:24). "And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him" (Col. 3:10). Now, did you notice the three aspects? Knowledge, righteousness, and holiness. And, all three words relate to the law of God. [These three aspects are the focus of God's recreating work for] restoring means. That's what it originally was. So, let's explore these three words for a moment: knowledge, righteousness, and holiness.

God created us with the ability to know Him and His will: knowledge. God created us with the ability to serve in all what we purpose, think, and do: that's the word righteousness. Thirdly, God created us with the ability to love with a devotional intensity: that is holiness. So, to sum it up, we were designed to reflect our Creator in our being and in our doing: being who we were, doing what he asked us to do. We were equipped, we were adorned, we were enabled to be the communication, or the channel, to all creation of the love and the devotion and the goodness of the Creator according to God's law. We were, I may simply say, the hand and the feet of the law of God, and we were to distribute that, or to act it out and to live it out, in the creation as His representative.

So, how do they know this law then? There is no record in Genesis 1 and 2 that God gave them a lecture about the 10 Commandments, did He? No. We must conclude that God had written on their hearts the law of God as He promises to do again in the regenerating work that He does in His people spiritually. So, if the law was written on their heart, what law was written on their heart?

Let's listen to the words of the Lord Jesus again in Matthew 22:37–40 when He is confronted by the lawyer and is asked to give what is the greatest commandment. Here is His answer. He says, "The first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God is one Lord," that's a confession, "And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment. And the second is like, namely this, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." And then He concludes, 'There is none other commandment greater than these: love.' Now notice how Jesus gave the answer to the lawyer about what is the greatest commandment.

There are some people who would say what Jesus gave in Matthew 22 [and Mark 12] is the summary of the ten commandments. Maybe you thought that too. I used to think that as well: it's a short version of Exodus 20. That's not correct. It is the original law that Jesus verbalizes that was given in Paradise to Adam and Eve. The 10 Commandments, friends, are a brief exposition of the original law: thou shalt love God, and thou shalt love thy neighbor. The law that Adam and Eve received in Paradise is expounded briefly in the 10 Commandments.

Now the Lord Jesus ended this remarkable statement and answer about the law of God to the lawyer with these words, "on these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets" (Matthew 22:40). Today we would include all the New Testament as well, but when Jesus spoke that obviously only, at that stage, the Old Testament was in existence. So, what does it mean, that statement? That means this: everything in the Scripture from the law of Moses to the prophetic sections into the New Testament is built upon, is anchored in, the original law of God that God gave to Adam and Eve, wrote on their heart, in Paradise. The Jews have an old saying that all the prophets stood at Mount Sinai and that all their prophecies are anchored into that law of Mount Sinai. Perhaps we can expand that statement and say that all mankind once stood in Paradise, in Adam, knowing the original law of our Creator.

Let's go back to Paradise. How did this law now function in the life of Adam and Eve? Well, when you read through the first chapters of Genesis, it brought perfect joy, harmony, peace. Why was that? Why was that character of Paradise defined in these three words? It's because they lived in a total obedience to the law of God. They were devoted in love to God with the great intensity of their being. Every fiber of their being was devoted to love God. Every imagination of that creative and genius mind was to love God. Every ounce of their physical strength was devoted to love God. Every minute of their waking hours was spent in loving God above all. And of course, that flowed out into their relationships to one another. Naturally, they loved each other with the most self-denying love. They served each other day and night, enjoyed the beauty of their relationship in a spiritual way, in a social way, in an emotional way, in a physical way, in a sexual way. All of that gave expression to "thou shalt love your neighbor as yourself." By doing this and by being like this, they abode in God's love, as Jesus brings out in John 15:10.

Let's meditate for a moment on these words of Jesus. He says, "If you keep my commandments, you shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love." Notice Jesus abides in the love of His Father by keeping His commandments. Always those two are related, connected, from beginning to the end in the holy Scriptures. To *be* loving and to *do* loving is to live the law of God. Then we could ask a quick question, "But what about the test commandment in Genesis 2:16–17 not to eat of the tree?" This commandment, as well as the other commandments that are given in the context of Genesis 1 and 2 about being fruitful and multiply, keep the garden, manage and expand and develop the earth, they were indeed specific commandments, but we must not separate those from the original law of God to love Him and [our] neighbor.

The "don't eat from the tree" command (let's take that one specifically) was specifically designed as a symbolic reminder to Adam and Eve that they were bound to the law of God. It was to remind them that their authority was subject to the authority of God and that their liberty was also subject to the law of God. When Satan comes around on the scene, he tempts them. And, the essence of the temptation is 'if you eat of the tree, you shall be like God; you have the supreme authority, and you have the supreme liberty; you are no more limited by any commandments of the authority of God.' And indeed, they did. In the act of eating, they grasp for more

power and liberty than God had given them. They attempted, in essence, to rewrite the law according to their own authority. And by doing that, they made an attempt to dethrone the God of heaven and earth.

Yet, we may go one step further. Their obedience to this one symbolic command *not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil* was in essence the breaking of the entire spirit of the original law of God. And Adam and Eve broke, with that one deed, all ten commandments of the law as given on Mount Sinai.

Let me illustrate that briefly in conclusion. They broke the first in choosing to trust and honor a false god above the Lord God, their own Creator. In the second commandment, they broke the second commandment by honoring Satan's misrepresentation of God as being untrustful and unwilling to make them supremely happy and to worship Him according as God had commanded. They broke the third in breaking the covenant vow to God, and in doing so, they desecrated His holy name and His image in which they were created. They broke the fourth as they shattered the Sabbath day rest, or the rest symbolized on the Sabbath day that existed in the relationship between God and them. They broke the fifth when they dishonored their heavenly Parent in casting off His authority. And what was the result? Their days were not prolonged in the land of the living. They broke the sixth in massacring the entire human race when Adam indeed, as the representative of us all, acted in rebellion. As well, they committed spiritual suicide. They broke the seventh by committing spiritual adultery with God's adversary as well as destroying the beauty of their own relationship as husband and wife, as can be clearly seen in Genesis 3. They broke the eighth by stealing from the tree that God had forbidden them to eat from. They broke the ninth by indirectly bearing false witness against God as they believed the devil's lie to be the truth above God's word. And clearly, they broke the tenth when they coveted a new position to be like God, rather than to be satisfied and content with the position God had given them as the head of the creation and the stewards of the earth.

So, let's reflect one more moment with a lingering looking back at this beautiful, glorious beginning. The chief beauty of Adam and Eve, dear friends, was their beauty of holiness. Their life shone with the glory of love in everything they did, every act, every word, every motive was a ray of the glorious love of God shining through their very being. There was no impurity of thought. There was no misspoken word. There was never miscommunication causing friction. There was no straining their relationship due to selfishness or sinful anger, or pride, or unwillingness. That was a supreme happiness. Their experience with God and with each other was beautiful beyond description. Why? Because they lived as holy, devoted, obedient humans in relationship with God and each other.

The call to honor God was not a heavy task for Adam and Eve. Their conscience had nothing to do but to approve every deed they did and feast upon their obedience unto God's law. They knew no shame. They knew no fear. They knew no sorrow. They didn't need a blushing in their face. They lived a life of pure delight and unsullied pleasure in the context of the holy beauty of loving God and loving each other. Their greatest pleasure was not the surrounding Paradise. The greatest pleasure of this original couple of mankind was [that] they walked with God and with each other in the total beauty of harmony, relationship of love. We need to deeply reflect on the stately beginning of us men.

If you compare that brilliant beginning to the ruins of today, that ought to make us blush. That ought to humble us. That ought to shame us, what we have done with God's glorious beginning. The facts are facts. We caused our own ruin. There was no design flaw in us to lead us into our fall. Fact is fact. Besides, what we ruined, we cannot repair. However, let's not make the wrong conclusion. Though we have disabled ourselves today to obey the law of God perfectly, that doesn't mean that God has canceled the law. He has not taken that law away. It endures forever, and if the Bible would end here, where we are today, then it would be a hopeless reality.

But, praise God, our fall became the occasion for God to reveal more of His greatness as He unfolds the gospel message in Jesus Christ, the last Adam. And, I then propose that in the next session we will look first at this last Adam and His relationship to the law of God. Thank you.

Lecture 4

JESUS AND THE LAW

Jesus said, Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill. This weighty statement of the Lord is an important key in our understanding of the intention as well as the beauty of God's eternal law. Often we associate the Person and work of Jesus Christ with the word 'Gospel' and rightly so. But it may and must also be associated with the "Law of God."

Therefore in this module we will examine why the Lord Jesus is called the 'last Adam' and how that is related to His announcement that He didn't come to destroy the law of God.

TRANSCRIPT LECTURE 4

Dear friends, it's always a joy to study the Scripture and to find new truths that are perhaps somewhat unexplored, though are undoubtedly somewhat known. What I have done in the previous two lectures, and we are studying the law of God, is to try to give a different perspective on the law. We began by looking first at the law-giver, and He is an awesome God: a God Who is love; Who reflects Himself in the commandment to love; a God Who is holy, separate from us sinners, but also intensely devotional, pure. This reflects itself in the law of God. [He] is sovereign, [a God] Who has given us laws according to His divine good pleasure, a God Who is just. He's not above the law. So, looking at the law of God from that perspective, hopefully, has already given us a deeper appreciation for what the law is all about. Now, the second nugget of gold truth is that we've looked at the law in Paradise, how Adam and Eve related to God and to each other and thereby reflected the image of God also in their life of obedience, loving God and loving each other. The law was written on the heart, and it was their joy to obey God in love and to love God in obeying.

Now in this lecture, I want to take you to the last Adam. He stands in contrast to the first Adam. There's a reason that God calls Him the last Adam. There is a similarity between the first and the last. Both of them, Adam before his fall and Jesus Christ, were perfect, sinless, holy. So, as the Lord Jesus is announced in the announcement to Mary by the angel, notice what the angel says to Mary, "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing," that holy One, "that shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God" (Luke 1:35). So, Jesus Christ as He is born, He is born, as Paul says, "in the likeness of sinful flesh" (Romans 8:3) but not sinful. He is as Adam was in his first creation. He is also the last Adam. Many of us mistakenly say "Second Adam." I'm guilty of that, but the Scripture calls Him the "last Adam" for a purpose: there is no other one necessary. He has fulfilled the law, and that is what we will in this day also look at together.

Our thoughts are going to take us to Matthew chapter 5, the Sermon on the Mount. This sermon begins with a magnificent description of who are Jesus' kingdom people. The seven beatitudes describe, in a sketch, the characteristics of the born-again soul, and those seven are followed with two that describe the world's reaction upon these people. Then, Jesus gives a brief description of the calling of the citizens to be the salt and the light. And then, He comes to a very significant portion for our study about the law of God. Let me read verse 17. He says, "Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill." Let's park our thoughts here for a moment and ask ourselves the question first, 'Why did Jesus teach this? What is the background? What is the motivation behind this?' And notice He begins, "Think not that I am come." He's obviously tying it into what people were thinking.

And what were people thinking? Well, His first reason for speaking this word is in defense of His own ministry. There are people out there thinking that Jesus Christ is overthrowing God's law as He overthrew many traditions and many commandments that had been added. They thought, 'He is overthrowing God's law.' Christ makes very clear that He is not come to destroy the law or the prophets. He wants to make it clear that He wants to bring a correction in how people thought about the law. And if you look through the rest of Matthew 5, you notice that the Lord Jesus carefully is correcting misinterpretations of the law. As He says, 'You have heard that it was said by them of old time' (verse 21). That's what they were thinking. 'But I say unto you [that] [these are] what God's thoughts are. This is what the original law was.' So therefore, Christ is defending His own ministry and correcting people's thoughts about the misinterpretation of it.

The second reason why He speaks this is to prevent a corruption of His teaching or a perversion of the doctrines of grace He came to bring in His teaching ministry. There are many who took Jesus' teaching about 'we are saved by grace alone' in a direction that came to mean 'obedience doesn't matter; we only are saved by grace; we're not anymore under the law.' [This is] a very important aspect, which we will discuss in a further study. But, everything in Jesus' ministry counters this interpretation that obedience doesn't matter.

Now the third reason that Jesus speaks these words from verses 17 to 20 has to do with what He says in verse 20. He is, also here, correcting a very false and fatal teaching of the Pharisees. Let me read verse 20, "For I say unto you, that except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you shall in no case enter the kingdom of heaven." This teaching of Christ caused a little tidal wave in the people when they heard [it]. He literally turned the religious world of that day upside down with this verse: 'except your righteousness exceeds what the scribes and Pharisees are teaching and showing, you will in no wise enter the kingdom of heaven.'

Now, what Jesus did not teach there is, 'People, you need to have more good works, exceed the good works that the scribes and Pharisees have been trying to teach you and to do, in order to enter the kingdom of heaven.' No, the word exceed doesn't go layer upon layer. The word exceed goes [in] the opposite direction. If it doesn't go deeper than the outside obedience that the scribes and Pharisees are teaching, you shall in no wise enter the kingdom of heaven. He goes at the heart, and really with this verse 20, the Lord Jesus Christ underlines the absolute necessity for Himself. For, there is no righteousness in our hearts, and if it has to come from there, it isn't there. So really, in a sense, verse 20 is also meant to lead us to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now let's go back to verse 17. This is a cardinal verse in our study about the law of God: "Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill." Did you notice, first of all, that Jesus makes clear that He values the law of God? He says, 'I am not here to destroy anything of the law or anything of the prophets.' This is a pillar of truth and vital for our understanding of how the law, today also, functions in the New Testament church and whether the 10 Commandments [have] relevance for us today. Jesus' ministry is to recover [and] to restore, not to rewrite or to overwrite the law of God. He's going back to the original, where it started, where it always was, and what it should be.

Now let's understand it well. He says, 'I am not come to destroy the law and the prophets, but I've come to fulfill it.' It is easy to see how Jesus fulfilled the prophets. He was born in Bethlehem. Micah said that. He was born of the Virgin Mary. Isaiah prophesied that. So, He fulfilled literally the details of hundreds of prophets in the Old Testament, but now let's take that law word: 'I have not come to destroy the law but to fulfill the law also.' What was meant of the law in this context must be determined out of the chapter. Some say the law means here the ceremonial law, the law that deals with the sacrifices, that deals with the temple worship. True. The Lord

Jesus Christ is the ultimate fulfillment of the law of the ceremonies. But in the context of this chapter, He's not speaking about that.

You notice He's speaking about moral commandments: Thou shall not kill, shall not commit adultery, you shall love your enemies. Those are moral issues. So, it is only fair to conclude that Jesus here is thinking about the moral law in verse 17: I have not come to destroy, rewrite, overturn, the moral law. I'm not come to adjust it to a new New Testament context. I'm not here to do that. I am here to fulfill the law. And, the word fulfill has a beautiful meaning. It means 'to bring out the fullness of it.' It means 'to show forth the glory and the fulfillment of the law and the significance of it.' And, if you look at Jesus' life, and it's what I want to do with you briefly yet in this session, you will notice that Jesus Christ is the law of God made visible in His doings, in His actions, and [in] how He relates, how He reacts, how He loves. His entire life has one mission: to fulfill the law of God in a life that is devoted to God and to His name. Where the first Adam failed, the last Adam succeeded.

So then, how did Jesus fulfill the law of God? In three ways. First, He fulfilled it by the way He lived it. Just as He fulfilled prophecies by the way He lived, so He fulfilled the law by the way He lived. He made God's original law visible to us in how He lived the details of His life. No one since Adam's dreadful rebellion has lived a life of holiness, has lived a life of devotional love, like the Lord Jesus Christ, the last Adam, did. And therefore, friends, Jesus Christ is the exposition of the law of God as it originally was made and revealed. He honored it. He magnified it in the glory of His life, in His talk and actions. And, I will give you just two thoughts to ponder that.

The first part of the law is to love God above all, with all of what you are. Jesus did that. When He stood in His life as the last Adam, He faced the command opposite of what the first Adam received. The first Adam was told, "Thou shalt not eat." The second Adam is told, "Thou shalt drink the cup, the cup of the curse." That was Jesus' mission: to honor and obey His Father to the utmost. We know the first Adam failed. We know that this last Adam struggled. As we see Him in Gethsemane, we see His feelings of fear, struggling intensely to drink the cup His Father is holding out before Him. As He envisions being forsaken, as He envisions descending into the reality of hell, forsaken of God and of His church, He struggles. We know the story, "Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: but not my will but thy will be done" (Matthew 26:39). Eventually, Jesus denied His own feelings. He loved His Father's will above His own, and He loved His people to the end in paying the ultimate price.

Do you see the love to God illustrated in this glorious aspect? Notice His love to His neighbor, any neighbor that came across His path. He loved devotionally. He loved sacrificially. He loves them genuinely and beautifully, whether it was a foe or a friend. For three years, He walked with a man who is going to betray Him and have Him killed. He walked with Judas Iscariot. He showed him genuine love unto the last moment, devoted to him. He wasn't afraid to sacrifice His reputation, to stand up for women, to stand up for publicans and sinners, in face of the religious elite. Why? He loved them as His own. He even loved, devotionally, the Pharisees and the Scribes as He ministered to them, preached to them, reached out to them. He prayed for His enemies that crucified Him. He pardoned [a] repentant sinner who appealed to Him on the cross. All of it shows how He fulfilled law of God.

No place do we see an exposition of the moral law better than we see in the life of Jesus. That's the first way in which He fulfilled the law. The second way in which Jesus fulfilled the law is, of course, to do with His obedience on the cross. He bore the penalty. He took the penalty of sin on behalf of His church. Since that falls outside the scope of this lecture on the law of God, I leave that now further untouched.

The third meaning of fulfilling the law has to do with Jesus' work in writing the law in His people's hearts and lives. Just as the law on Mount Sinai was written with the finger of God in stone, so Jesus' Spirit writes the law upon the heart of sinners. In that sense, He also fulfills the law of God. And, this is a critical and important teaching, friends. In John 3, Jesus taught about the new birth: "Except a man be born again he cannot enter the kingdom of heaven" (verses 3-5). Notice the word cannot, not may not. May not speaks about permission. Cannot speaks about condition. He says, "You cannot in this fallen condition enter the kingdom of heaven. [This is the] kingdom law. You need to be born again." We need to be radically changed by the Spirit of God. That law has to be written in us, and Paul therefore refers to that in Romans 8:4. And the word fulfilled is in that text. He says about the work of grace, "that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us." Now, salvation is not only to be parted from sin, [but] salvation is also to be conformed to the image of Jesus Christ. What a beautiful

prospect. And finally, redeemed humanity will shine brilliantly with the image of God in which we all will fulfill the law, as Jesus did in His life, in a new heaven and a new earth.

Now, let's run more to return to Matthew 5:18-19, briefly. You notice that Jesus underlines the permanency of the law. In verse 18, [He] very much stresses, even, "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." One jot or one tittle are the smallest little signs in the language that are almost insignificant, you'd say today, like our commas or apostrophe. Jesus says, 'Nothing of the law shall be taken away. Not the slightest change will I allow anyone to make.' And then in verse 19, He concludes this with a strong warning about "whosoever shall break one of the least of these commandments, and shall teach men so to do, 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."

Now it's safe to conclude from what we've learned that the Lord gives an awful warning here about us not rewriting, ignoring, [or] canceling any part of the law of the 10 Commandments. And, that makes sense from what we learned in our previous lectures if the law is the reflection of the lawgiver. Therefore, the law can't change if the lawgiver won't change. And the lawgiver won't change; He is eternally the same. His character doesn't change; therefore, His law will not change. God's 10 Commandments are dateless, a predated creation of angels and men, and they will outlast this world forever into the New World, wherein dwells righteousness. And, Paul understood the significance of that, so he, after teaching the wonderful gospel of justification by faith, concludes Romans 3 with "do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law."

So, let us wrap this up. The gospel is the good news that God came to save sinners by the doing of the law and the dying, the penalty of the law, of Jesus Christ. In other words, friends, Jesus honored [and] obeyed the law both in the demand for obedience and in the penalty for disobedience. Where the first Adam failed, the last Adam succeeded. And on the basis of His own Word as the law keeper, Jesus now says, "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28).

Maybe the law studies [are] going to increase a sense of unease in you and me as we look at this picture of what we are to be like and what love is supposed to look like and what the details of obedience, also in honoring God, [are] to be like. We will have a sense of unease and a sense of conviction. Maybe the viewing of God's holiness will make us a little uneasy. And then hear that message of the Savior, 'Come unto me, all you that are laboring and are heavy laden with guilt, with your inability, with your struggles, with your past, with your present, come unto me, and I will give you rest.'

And the rest that Christ gives is that He has fulfilled the law. That is that He kept the law, and by that also becomes a substitute for sinners. There is the rest of pardon on the basis of His blood. There is the rest of acceptance on the basis of His merits, but there is no rest in relaxing from obedience, as the Lord Jesus Himself concludes in that verse, "Take my yoke learn of me my yoke is easy light" (Matthew 11:29-30). And as Lord Jesus teaches us later in John 14:15, "If you love me, keep my commandments." And those commandments aren't any different in than the ones He gave us in the 10 Commandments on Mount Sinai.

So, in the next two lectures, we're going to look one more time at the law in relationship to the sinner and in relationship to the saint, before we actually then move on to study the 10 Commandments. So, thank you again, and may God bless these words to you and me.

Lecture 5

THE LAW AND THE SINNER

Since our fall, we have lost every ability in ourselves to obey the law of God. But not all people are seeing that reality. As a matter of fact, none of us see this reality until grace awakens. Only then we learn to see that we are all included in Paul's statement, There is none righteous, no not one. In this module we hope to consider how God brings sinners to this awareness of ourselves and the need for the Lord Jesus Christ and His salvation. As we do, we discover that His law plays an indispensable role in that learning journey.

TRANSCRIPT LECTURE 5

Welcome to our fifth lecture about the law of God. Today's lecture is entitled The Law and the Sinner, and our Scripture verse that we'll take as our goal to expound and to think about is from Romans 3:20 where it says, "For by the law is the knowledge of sin." Although we have studied in our previous lectures that the law is good and holy and just because it reflects our lawgiver, yet it is common knowledge to most of us that the law causes unease. It causes distress in us, even resistance, pushback. Why is that? That has to do, of course, with the condition that we're in today as sinners.

Since the fall in Paradise, our relationship to the law has changed. There is now no [friendly] relationship anymore between us and the law because we broke the law. So, we're in a conflict with God and with God's reflection as He's given us in His holy law. And yes, the law can do only one thing to us sinners at this point. It can only accuse us and prosecute us and demand condemnation, and that is intuitively felt by all of us as we think about the law of God. So yes, in consequence of our condition, we now have a hatred against God and His holy law.

That's very pointedly spoken of in Romans chapter 8. We will consider that verse, and Paul speaks about [us being] at enmity with God and [how] we cannot be subject to the law of God in the condition that we are today (Romans 8:7). Let's be clear that this is no reflection on the law of God itself. There's no fault in the law. The apostle Paul shares with us, in Romans 7, his conflict with the law of God when the Lord indeed converted him. Before his conversion, he resisted God's law. But upon his conversion, he even resisted it more when he felt the resistance of his heart driving up against God's law when it came to him particularly in the 10th commandment, "thou shalt not covet."

But in the end, the apostle Paul reassures his readers [that] there is nothing wrong with the law. The law is good, holy, and just. It's our sinfulness problem that reacts upon the holiness and the justice of God's law. So the question then is, 'How can this condition change? How can we come to love the law of God as David expressed in his devotional book, the Psalms? The short answer is, 'That's now God's work of salvation. He is the One and the only One [Who] can change our condition.'

In this lecture, I'd like to explore with you how God now uses His own law to save a sinner. Let's define what I mean with a sinner. A sinner is an unregenerate, unrepentant, unbelieving, spiritually dead person defined in the Scriptures (for example, [in] Ephesians 2, the first 3 verses, Paul describes the Ephesians as being dead in trespasses and sin). So, I propose to consider the use of the law that God uses in our salvation. And first, let's consider for a moment what the law is not in our salvation. And secondly, let's look at how God uses the law to bring us to the knowledge of salvation.

So, the purpose of the law in the life of a sinner is not to give us instruction in how to be saved from our sin and guilt. Before Adam and Eve broke their covenant with God, law-keeping, or work-obedience, was the way to life. God promised them the eternal life, the quality of life and deepening relationship with Him, upon obedience. That was the original intent of the law, the way to life. "Do this and you shall live," live in an ever-deepening relationship with God, which in the New Testament is mostly always called eternal life. But, we are no more in this spiritual condition of Paradise. And, you see, here is where the Jewish Pharisees went wrong. And in essence, here goes all religion wrong that is not pure Christianity.

The Pharisees saw law obedience as the way to life. They saw actually no difference in the context of the law in Paradise and the law at Sinai, but the context is radically changed. Even though the law is the same, though the original law of Paradise and the exposition of that original law at Mount Sinai are the same, the context in which God gives that law is not the same. Recall [that] Paradise was the context of the covenant of works. The law directed these original parents, 'walk, do, and you shall live.' What's the context of Mount Sinai? That's no more the covenant of works; that's the context of the covenant of grace.

As we will look specifically at the 10 Commandments, you notice the first opening statement, commonly called the preamble, speaks about deliverance, speaks about grace: "I am the Lord thy God which has brought thee out of Egypt out of the land of house of bondage." You notice what God reminded them of, "I am the Lord thy God:" relationship, grace relationship. And, this is important to grasp, for here the Pharisees struggled to understand even the ministry of Jesus. Paul regretfully needs to share how he looked at the Romans as his brothers, as it were, in the flesh. And, he describes in Romans 10 the fatal mistake that the Jews cling to with regard to salvation. Hear this, he says in Romans 10:2-3, "For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God," they're zealous and sincerely zealous, but not according to knowledge, "for they being ignorant of God's righteousness," or God's law obedience, "and going about to establish their own righteousness," in their own law obedience, "have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God," which is the righteousness which He has given in His Son Jesus Christ's doing and dying.

So, [it is] essential for us to understand that the law in relationship to us sinners is not given as the way to life. Then what is the purpose of the law in relationship to us as a sinner? First, it is God's diagnostic tool to convict us of our sin, to confront us with the hopelessness and helplessness of our condition. Remember [that] Romans 3:20 stated, "for by the law is the knowledge of sin." In Romans 7:7 the apostle expounds this somewhat further when he says, "What shall we say then? Is the law sin? God forbid," no way! "Nay, I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not known lust, except that the law said, Thou shalt not covet." You notice how he there shares that his knowledge of his own sinfulness came by that diagnostic tool that God used in the law. "By the law is the knowledge of sin." That means that God uses His law to bring home the diagnosis of what we are now in His holy sight. God uses His law as a mirror to set before us, how far we are off the mark, how unsightly we are. Even though we may cover ourselves with fig leaves of religious things and good deeds, we are still at naked, as it were, in His sight, shameful, sinful.

Now, the law is used to teach us that. We're blind for this condition. As outlined again in Ephesians 2 and 3, we're blind about the condition we're in. We don't feel the sin as sin. We don't realize how bad sin is until God comes in with His law to make us feel [and] sense what it is to be a sinner. And no matter how much gospel we hear, friends, we simply are not interested in the message until we feel the hurt, until we feel the spiritual cancer, until we have the knowledge of sin.

Let me give an example. We've had a great surgeon in our town where I live for many years already. Each week he treats many people. He replaces knees, five or six of them each week, and has done this for 15 years. I might have heard of him sometime, but I didn't pay any attention to him. I didn't think about him. I didn't need him until my knee began to hurt so [badly that] I couldn't sleep or sit, [it was] so painful. Then, I went to look for

the surgeon, not before that, and I remember coming to him and telling him, “I don’t need a big surgery. I know what I need. I need again a little repair.” He says, “Friend, let’s go make an x-ray. Let’s see what is the problem.” I saw the problem. I felt the problem, and I submitted to the knee replacement surgery in my own body. Now, that illustration is only [to show] a use [of the law]. This is how God uses the law. This is the case with all of us.

Not until we feel the pain of sin, not until we have a sense of the burden of sin (or if we see and taste the bitterness of the evil of sin, and we get a realization of the banishment that we have caused by our sins from God when He ushered us out of Paradise, that means out of His communion), not until we feel those things will we become serious about the gospel message of Jesus Christ. And so, to get us serious, God uses the law to bring conviction, to make us feel the need for a Savior bigger than ourselves. He uses the law as a hammer to humble us, to crush that pride, that resistance that lives within us that Paul described in Romans 7.

Now, I agree that such an awakening is a rude reality to realize. If all of the sudden I get the message I have an incurable cancer, my life falls apart like a card house. Well, so it is spiritually. When God uses His law to bring home to us the condition we are in, [then] yes, we feel a fright. It makes us feel vulnerable [and] ashamed, but how necessary this is to open up our hearts for the Lord in His salvation. That’s not typically our first reaction. Our first reaction is, ‘Let’s go change. Let’s improve. Let me do something.’ Now, that’s a hopeless action, for no matter what we do, everything we do falls under God’s standard of perfection. Even our best works, the prophet writes in Isaiah 64, are like filthy rags (verse 6).

So, it falls outside the scope of this lecture for me to explore our spiritual condition in deeper detail. I urge you to ponder your own diagnosis as outlined in the Scriptures. Take Romans 3:10-18, or look at Mark 7:20-23 to study the diagnosis that God gives of us humans in His Word. And why is that necessary? That every mouth may be stopped from excusing, from minimizing, from denying, from objecting before God’s law. That we all may become guilty before God. That’s how Paul put it in Romans 3. That makes us willing to also begin to listen to the message of the gospel, and that is then the second great use in which God uses the law. He uses the law to guide us sinners to Jesus Christ.

Let’s go to Galatians 3:24 where Paul stated this use of the law in these words. He says, “Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us to Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by faith.” That last part is the gospel: justified by faith, by faith in the Lord Jesus. How did we get there? He says God used the law as a schoolmaster. Let us understand what the word schoolmaster means. In the Greek culture, a schoolmaster was someone who collected children and brought them to school to be taught by a teacher. In our culture, we might call the schoolmaster the bus driver. That’s all he was. He wasn’t a teacher. He was the means, the person, who guided the children to the school to be taught. Each day he would do the same thing. Each day, he would go around and gather the children to bring them to school.

Now, Paul uses that cultural schoolmaster idea to compare how God uses the law to bring us to the Lord Jesus Christ. The law doesn’t save us. The law has no ability to save us. It can only accuse the sinner, but God uses it in His ministry of the Spirit to bring us to the Savior. And so, this relationship between the law and the gospel is extremely important for us to grasp well and never to mix them up or eliminate either one of them.

Let me therefore bring this together for a moment yet: how law and gospel work together in God’s saving ministry. Think of the law as God’s court servant to bring us to the throne of grace. That’s where He wants us to come. That’s why He sent out the law as a convicting court servant, arresting us, alarming us in order to lead us to Christ. The law says, “Do,” and then we begin to realize that we can’t do and that we did do the wrong things and stand guilty. And, God uses that demand that we can’t meet to bring us unto the gospel of Jesus Christ, and the gospel of Jesus Christ says, “Done.” So, He uses the “do” to bring us to the “done” of Christ’s work.

Or another example: God uses the law as the needle in the doctor’s hand. He has this needle and this injection with medicine, and he wants to get that medicine under our skin. What [does] he do? He pokes that needle in the skin. That hurts. It doesn’t heal. No, the law doesn’t heal. The law pricks. But it is the way for that needle to get into that skin for Him to administer medicine into the body. And so, God uses the law again in His ministry to bring us to the gospel

So, we learned earlier that the schoolmaster does his work every day, not once [but] every day. That’s also true [in] spiritual life. [As] the law initially alarms us to seek the Lord Jesus Christ, so the law continues to be a source of conviction, even in the life of God’s saints. [This is] especially [true] the more and more we look at the

person of Jesus Christ, as we saw in our previous lecture, and see in Him the fulfillment of the law in the way He lived, in the way He acted, in the way He reached out, in the way He denied Himself, loved His Father [and] loved others.

Friends, the more we look at that picture of the law, also in the life of grace, the more conviction will be experienced and the more need for Christ will be experienced as well. So, God's saints, though fully justified by faith, aren't fully sanctified until they are glorified. The apostle Paul confesses that in Romans 7:14. He makes a startling statement, "I am carnal, sold under sin." Being regenerate, he still says, "I find a law working in me against the law to love the Lord. I find this war inside of me" (Romans 7:21-23).

Why is that? This is what Paul writes in Romans 8:7. He says, "Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." The carnal mind, enmity, which cannot be subject to the law of God. See, when God saves a person, He doesn't convert the carnal old man. He will starve him and subdue him, and finally, in the day of our decease, He will redeem us from the body of death that we carry along. And so, the Lord continues to be a source of conviction, also in the life of God's saints, or we could say he continues to be a schoolmaster to bring us to the Lord Jesus.

So when we now conclude together, I encourage you to have some personal reflections about your spiritual journey and your relationship to the law of God as a sinner, for the Pharisees of Jesus' days are not extinct in our day. It is easy for us to fall back in their error, which is officially called legalism or works-based salvation. Examine that in yourself, how easy it is for us to think that way. This thinking is familiar to us. Let's be honest.

We operate on that level every day in our daily, natural life. You know you work hard to get ahead. Be good and you get a promotion. Please the boss, and you may get a pay raise. That's how we operate. We think works-based, merit-based obedience brings blessing, and this thinking feels very natural to us because that's once also how we related to our Creator when we were in Paradise. We always were acting on that basis [of our obedience to the law] to merit closer communion with the Lord. We knew that [at] that time, obedience was the way to life; but that's no more the way today.

Today, it is Jesus that is the way to life. "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me," (John 14:6) the Lord Jesus speaks. That means by Him Who, in His doing and in His dying, became for us the way to life again. And because grace thinking is so unnatural for us, Paul calls therefore the gospel in Jesus Christ a hidden wisdom of God. If you take a moment to read to I Corinthians 2, you'll see that developed beautifully by the apostle there. And he comes with this statement: "which eye has not seen, and ear has not heard, and neither has come up in the heart of man" (verse 9). Now, often we relate that verse to heaven, but in the context, it's related to the wisdom of God as is revealed in the person and work of Jesus Christ. Never could we think out the way of grace. It is not in us. It needs to come from without us. So, the question, friends, that we all need to face is the question on the verse we started with: Has God used the law to bring us to the knowledge of sin, which then also may be used as a schoolmaster to bring us to the Lord Jesus Christ?

And so, let me conclude by asking you a few questions to consider in your own personal reflection. Do you love God with all the intensity of your heart like Jesus did? All the time? Never compromising? Devoting yourself from morning to evening to do all things only to His glory, even when it would cost you dearly? Even when it would inconvenience you? Even when it might bring the scorn of the world? Even if it asks us [to pay] the ultimate price? By the law, this mirror in which all of this we could see in Jesus Christ perfectly, is the knowledge of sin.

Let's ask about the second part of the law. Do you love your neighbor as you love yourself? Are we spending as much comforting our neighbor as we spend comforting ourselves? A high standard, isn't it. Are we willing to sacrifice anything dear in order to love others as we love ourselves? And not only our friends and family. Let's ask about the enemy: those that hate us, those that curse us. Do we love our enemies as Jesus loved, lifted up on the cross and in all the agony, [and] prayed for His enemies, "Father forgive them"? Now, this is love, and this is the law. As we look at that picture, what does that do to you? Do we feed our enemy when he or she is hungry? That's what God the Father does each day as He shines His light and He brings His rain on the just and unjust (Matthew 5:45).

Why do I ask these questions? Do you sense how short we come of the glory of God in our life? That's the purpose. Why? Because, friends, this only will make us see the beauty and necessity of the Lord Jesus Christ for us personally. Listen to this. To top it all off, the apostle writes in Galatians 3:10, "Cursed is everyone who

continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them.” That’s sharp. That’s a terrible diagnosis as well as a terrible sentence: cursed because we do not keep all the things written in the book of the law. No, [it is] not comfortable to face this dark reality of God’s spiritual x-ray, but [it is] necessary so that we may learn with the apostle Paul, as he confessed in Philippians 3:9, counting all things lost that he first counted gain. And then, he expresses himself, “Oh, to be found in Him,” Jesus, “not having my own righteousness, which is of the law,” which he didn’t have - he saw it now - “but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith.”

So, our next lecture will be to explore the law again, now in relationship to saints: those who have been given grace. How does the law function in their life? May the Lord then blessing these lessons and multiply the fruit of it as we ponder this together. Thank you.

Lecture 6

THE LAW AND THE SAINT

None are more blessed than those who are called saints of God. Saved by grace, kept by grace, guided by grace and finally transferred from the realm of grace to the realm of glory. Such in short is the definition of the Gospel of God's grace. But what is the role and place of the Law of God in the life of the redeemed? Are we now above the law since Paul wrote to Timothy, Knowing this, that the law is not made for a righteous man but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and sinners?

In this module we will trace the teaching of God's law in the life of the saints of God.

TRANSCRIPT LECTURE 6

Greetings, friends. Today's lecture is called *The Law of God and the Saint*. I'd like to frame the lecture around two Scriptures, the one from Romans 8:29, 'For whom God did foreknow, He also did predestinate to the purpose that they be conformed unto the image of His Son.' Similar truth is brought out in Ephesians 1:4, "According as he has chosen us [in him] before the foundation of the world," and there comes that purpose again, "that [we] should be holy and without blame before him in love." So, it's clear from these two verses that God's ultimate purpose in salvation is that they would be conformed to the Lord Jesus Christ. In other words, He wants to restore the original glory of God's image and to make the redeemed live and love according to the law of God. So the way I propose, today, to cover the subject is by looking briefly at three questions. The first, what is now exactly the saint? Secondly, what is God's purpose in the salvation of the sinner? And third, what is the place of the law in the life of God's saints? So, let's look at these three in order.

First then, what is now a saint? A saint is someone who is united by faith to the Lord Jesus Christ. That definition goes much farther, or deeper, than the claim to be a Christian. The Lord Jesus speaks in Revelation 3 about those who have a name to live. They have a name to be a Christian, but they were dead. Judas Iscariot was one of Jesus's closest disciples. Yet, it appears he was not a saint; [he was] not united to the Lord Jesus Christ by faith. So, a saint is a sinner called and regenerated by the grace of the Holy Spirit. Before he was a barren branch connected to his covenant head Adam, no fruit from that forever. At God's time, such are made alive and engrafted into the true vine and are born again, or spiritually resurrected.

Secondly, a saint can be seen as a work in progress, Jesus's work in progress, to be specific. Ephesians 2:10 says, "for we are his workmanship created in Christ Jesus unto good works which God has before ordained that we should walk in them." Now, that statement is also a gospel in itself. We are his workmanship. God is at work to make out of a sinner a saint. And finally, the day will come when He will present His finished work unto His Father as a bride without spot and without wrinkle, faultless before the throne of God, and that is when He brings His people from the realm of grace to the realm of glory.

A saint doesn't necessarily feel saintly in this earthly life. That's in itself not a comforting truth, but it may be comforting to recognize that as a truth. A person who is a true believer will identify himself with the struggle that the apostle Paul describes in Romans 7. And that's the struggle of all the saints. Paul says he delighted in the law of God in the inner man. And yet, he says, I find within me this other law that is bringing me back, or seeking to bring me back, to serve sin and Satan. This reality was a perpetual warfare in the apostle Paul, and it makes him long for the day of Jesus Christ. And he knows that when He comes, he shall change his vile body like unto the glorious body of the Lord Jesus Christ.

So since it is struggle to be saintly, therefore every saint is to really heed the exhortation Jesus gives us in John 15, when He says, "Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in the vine," and then He concludes that statement saying, "For without me," or apart from me, "you can do nothing." And herein, Jesus encourages people not to seek to rely on themselves, but [to rely] upon Him as that vine and as the source. So, only when we then are, and when we abide, in Christ can we reach the high calling of the saints.

And that's the third thing about the saints. The saints have the highest calling. They have the calling to be blameless, to be harmless, the sons of God without rebuke in the midst of the perverse, in a crooked nation among whom ye shine as lights of the world. That statement of the Philippians 2 in short means, our calling is to reflect glory of God's holy law in loving Him and our neighbors in that degree that Jesus Christ loved and lived the law of God.

Our highest calling is thankfully connected to that workmanship of the Lord Jesus Christ that I alluded to already, and both are beautifully combined in Philippians 2:12-13. Paul is speaking to the saints in Philippi, and listen to how he addresses them. He says, "Wherefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your [own] salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God that worketh within you both to will and to do of his good pleasure." Each saint is responsible to work out the details of salvation, the reality of living as this light in the world worked out the details of your life. But, we aren't left to ourselves in this momentous calling. God is at work both making us willing and able to do according to His good pleasure.

So, having looked at the saint, we naturally come to our second main point, which is 'Now what is now really God's main or chief purpose in the salvation of the sinner and turning him into a saint?' Let me picture that with a picture out of our daily surrounding life. Think of those people who make it their task to restore old cars: rusty, banged-up, broken-up, stripped-down cars. When finally they have obtained one of such wrecks, they get to work. [It's] tedious: scraping, unbending, replacing, polish it, paint it. And finally, after much labor, they are presenting the old car as good as new and parade him forth to show off their achievement.

Now, God's salvation is not quite like that. His purpose is not to make it as good as new. His purpose is to take [a] direct sinner and make him as good as he or she originally was. It is the work of restoration. God finds His people either on the junkyard of the world (think of the Ephesians), or He finds them in the showroom of the church (think of Paul of Tarsus). But, wherever He finds them, they're in the same spiritual condition. Titus 3:3 sums up the condition of where God finds or how God finds all His people. Paul writes, "For we ourselves." Notice [that] he includes himself. "For we ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, [deceived], serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another." And now it is Jesus's work, it's His workmanship, in the work of this total restoration to renew the sinner in the image of Himself. Every line of that original glory in which we were created, every part of our personhood, it is His purpose to make it as good as the original.

He will grow the fruit of the Spirit and conform us totally to Himself, and that is to reflect the devotional love to God and to all His creation. Incidentally, by having reached that goal, that brings again the ultimate happiness that once filled mankind in their communion with God and with one another. So, to sum it up, God's purpose in salvation is that each saint fulfills the law in perfection, just as we heard earlier in the lecture series of Jesus, "I have not come to destroy the law, but I have come to fulfill the law" (Matthew 5:17). In that same way, friends, the purpose of salvation is that God will fulfill the law in the life of every saint. Do you sense this soul hunger to be holy? Do you sense in your heart that desire to be totally devoted and conformed unto the Lord Jesus Christ in the love and in the walk of your life and to reflect the Creator in His glory? Oh, and if you may see that in yourself,

then do rejoice. For then, God has begun a good work within you, and He will finish that good work in the day of Jesus Christ. That brings me to our last statement: What is now the place or the role of the 10 commandments in the life of the saints?

Now, some answer that the details of the 10 Commandments are no longer important for the New Testament believer. Their scriptural appeal is to some of the New Testament passages in Romans and also some in Galatians, but let me focus on Romans in this lecture. For example, Romans 13:8 is appealed to; it says, "Owe no man anything, but to love one another: for he that loveth [another] has fulfilled the law." In verse 10, Paul adds, "love worketh no ill to his neighbor, and therefore love is the fulfilling of the law." So, as long as we love, we fulfill the law. Such is then the conclusion that is made. Romans 6:14, is appealed to when it says, "For ye are not under the law, but under grace." So we have no more to do with the rigid 10 Commandments, for we are no more under the law but under grace.

Now, let's briefly examine that thinking behind this sentiment that the New Testament believer doesn't have to observe the details of the 10 Commandments. First of all, reflect on the previous lectures, the journeys we've made together in our study. We learned that the lawgiver's character is reflected in the law. Now if the law reflects Him in His essential glory, if we were created to shine with this mirrored perfection of our Creator, then why should the restoration work that Jesus Christ is accomplishing in His Church not include living according to the law of God as God expounded on Mount Sinai? Aren't the New Testament believers to hallow His name, to worship Him only in a spiritual way? Are we not as New Testament believers to uphold the sanctity of marriage and to stop killing others and to be honest and upright? Aren't the New Testament believers called to show their devotional love to God and to one another as Adam and Eve were required?

Friends, where did any of the apostles take Jesus's teaching into the direction of 'the details are not important, brethren. As long as you love God and love each other, don't worry about the details.'? If you study the books of the apostle Paul, you'll note that half the book is devoted to details of how to live and how to interact and how to love and speak. As a matter-of-fact, the specific laws of the New Testament are at various places referred or referenced in the various exhortations. I mean to say that the various commandments of the 10 are throughout the New Testament repeated in various ways, in various exhortations. Scholars have found 14 quotations and 12 verbal allusions in the New Testament to the 10 Commandments. That makes Exodus 20, besides Isaiah 53, the most frequently quoted passage of the Old Testament in the New [Testament]. I think that says something about how important the 10 Commandments are for the New Testament believers.

Now, the second thing we learned is that Jesus Christ didn't come to destroy the law but to fulfill it. He fulfilled the law by loving God and His neighbor. He did not replace it with love. He fulfilled it with the details of obedient living. And, of course, the most important element of our obedience and of our actions is that it needs to be love-driven or love-shaped, and that love needs to be the motivation and the spirit of any act of obedience that we show towards authorities, towards equals and towards God. That's the point of Romans 13. Paul says, what lies behind our actions needs to be love. Love is the fulfilling of the law. And yet, of course, the law provides us the direction and the details of how to love God and our neighbors.

Now thirdly, we also learned that Jesus Christ fulfills the law by writing the law on the hearts of His people. That was the promise in Jeremiah 31:33. Now, which law was Jeremiah speaking of? The only law he knew that could be written on the heart of people is the same law that God had written on the tables of stone as a perpetual reflection of His original glory.

And fourthly, we have also learned already, friends, that God's laws were intended for our good to promote and to preserve the joy and beauty of the relationship with Him and with each other. Only when we honor the rules of the relationship will we experience the beauty of holiness and the joy of communion. Now, why would that not be the case for the New Testament believer? Why are the rules of the relationship that God puts out in the 10 Commandments no more valid for us in the New Testament days? To say that all God wants is [for us] to love Him and our neighbor and not to worry about the details is like me saying to newlyweds on their marriage day, "Now that you're married, don't worry about how you live. Don't worry about what you do, as long as you love each other." You know such a marriage will not flourish when we don't watch the little details, the little dots in the i's and the little crossed t's in our daily interactions.

Then, what about Paul's words in Romans 6:14? He says, "You are not under law but under grace." Friends, the context of that chapter is the first clue to the answer. If you read through chapter 6, you know that that is Paul's answer to those who claim that it doesn't matter how we live as long as we live, for we're under grace. Jesus battled the Pharisees in His days who made too much of the law in their relationship to acceptance with God, that works-based salvation. But, Paul is battling, in Romans 6, another group of people who are making too little of the law and of obedience. They turned *saved by grace* into a license to sin. They didn't take God's law [seriously] enough, and that's the context of Roman 6.

So, how then does Paul answer this thought, "Don't worry about how we live"? Now it's a very complex and also very dense chapter. I draw only two or three thoughts out of it for you. First, Paul says if you're united to Christ, it is impossible to live in sin. In this chapter, Paul is writing about being in Christ. Did you know that Paul stated over 120 times in the New Testament that the believer is in Christ, that we share with Him in His death and in His life? That unity, that sharing with Him is pictured in baptism as he brings it out in verses four and five, "For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall also be in the likeness of his resurrection." So, we see that sharing. What's the purpose of that sharing?

Verse six tells us that "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." That's the purpose. This union is purposed to bring forth the fruit that we should not sin, or to say it positively, that we would reflect the law of God in holy living. The second thing that Paul brings out in this chapter is: Christ is your new master; you're no more under Satan or under sin or under the law, in the way you were, but you're under the new master, Jesus Christ, [and] under the life of grace. Before we were saved, we were under the master of sin and Satan. Now, when we're under the redeeming grace of Jesus Christ, we're no more under that bondage and that curse of the law. Now, that's a radical and a glorious change and deliverance. And that is what Paul seeks to bring out in that statement, 'We're no more under the law, brethren. We're under grace. We don't serve Satan anymore. We're no more in bondage or in slavery to our former master. We're now in grace under our new Master, the Lord Jesus Christ.'

So, Paul exhorts the Roman believers no more to think themselves slaves to sin and Satan. Instead, realize that you belong to Jesus. And, he says that in several verses. For example, verse 12, "Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in the lusts thereof." "Know you not, that to whom you yield yourself servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?" (verse 16). In between these verses, you notice that Paul keeps saying that we're dead to sin. In verse two, in verse seven, and in verse 11, he makes a statement: dead to sin.

There are two ways to explain this statement. The one [way is to] say *dead to sin* means that we're dead to the curse of sin. The other way says that means we're dead to the reign, to the dominion, and the authority of sin. Both interpretations are true, but in the context, the second one fits better. Sin is still present. Sin is still pressing its claim. But, remember, being united to Jesus, it has no more claim over us. So, in plain language, Paul says, 'Look, when sin and Satan, your former masters, come knocking on your door, you tell them, No more. I am dead to you. You are no more my master. All my members now belong to my new master, Jesus Christ. I yield my tongue, my eyes, my hands, and everything to Him to serve as instruments of righteous living to Jesus, my new Master.'

So, for me sum up this whole chapter in one short statement, nowhere in chapter 6 and beyond does Paul suggest we do not need to bother about the details of the obedience to the law of God, friends. The teaching that we are justified by faith apart from the works of the law never leads Paul to teach anywhere that we have a license to sin or to live the way we please. So, if I bring it together then, God's law remains the rule of life for the believers. Having been redeemed, each saint will ask the question, "What shall I render to the Lord for all these great benefits?" Now, Jesus has answered that. He said this, 'Show your love to Me and My Father by keeping My commandments, honoring My will, reflecting My character, following in My footsteps, being the light of the world as I am.'

One preacher once summed it up beautifully like this, "the law sends us to the gospel that we may be justified. The gospel sends us back to the law to inquire what our calling is now that we are justified." And why is it so important to emphasize this to each other? First, because it honors our lawgiver as we reflect in the practice of our daily life. Secondly, because it's the only way of experiencing the communion with God as Jesus taught us

in John 15:10–11. He says, “If you keep my commandments, you shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father’s commandments, and abide in his love. These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full.” There was no greater joy for Jesus than to experience communion with His Father. Likewise, there’s no greater joy [for] you and me [than] to experience communion with the Father and the Son. And that always and only will be in the context of holiness.

Friends, we’re ready to move a little closer to Mount Sinai. I request you for the next time to read carefully through Exodus 19 in order to prepare us to study the law of the Lord on Mount Sinai. Thank you, and may God bless us.

Lecture 7

THE LAW AT MT. SINAI

Unforgettable and deeply moving was the scene at Mt. Sinai when God proclaimed His eternal Law to the people of Israel. Young and old, including all the leaders of Israel, stood trembling and drew back in holy awe. Never before and never since has God spoken like He did at Mt. Sinai. Only the voice of God as it will be heard upon Jesus's return on the clouds of heaven and earth will match this majesty of God.

But why did God choose to display Himself to His redeemed people Israel in this moving manner? He never has done anything without a purpose and certainly His purpose then must have significance for us today.

TRANSCRIPT LECTURE 7

Welcome again, dear friends. Today's lecture is on the law at Mount Sinai, and the best way to capture the setting of it is to listen first to what Moses describes in Exodus 19, particularly in verses 16 and 18 when he describes the incredible scene that the Lord displayed on the top of the mount. 'There were in that morning thunders and lightnings,' he writes, 'a thick cloud surrounded the mountain top. The voice of the trumpet became exceedingly loud so that the people in the camp trembled.' And as the people stood there at the very edge of the mountain, the whole mountain is in smoke because the Lord descended in fire. And in that context, they stand there looking at this incredible, majestic display.

The voice of God speaks, "I am the LORD thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage." The lawgiver speaks the words that He later literally carved into stones. And even though we have together searched out the lawgiver's character and have seen that He is love, devotional, sincere, [and] pure, it is noteworthy that God comes on this mountain to give His law in a majestic display that is so awe-inspiring that even Moses said, "I exceedingly fear and quake," as Hebrews 12:21 informs us. It seems to be so opposite of what God's nature is: loving or love, rather. It seems so opposite [to] the nature and the life and the gentleness of Jesus, Who fulfilled the law. Why then did God deliver His command to love Him above all and our neighbor as ourselves in such a fear-inspiring and ear-deafening manner? That's the question that in this lecture we need to think about together.

So, let us first consider the setting in the first observation of how the 10 Commandments are given, and second let's think a little deeper about the reasons why God proclaimed the 10 Commandments in this manner. So, what is the setting in which the Lord brought the 10 Commandments? Well literally, friends, no event has been so majestic as the giving of the law of God on Mount Sinai. God never spake before as He did then, and we will never hear His voice in that majestic power until the day that Jesus returns in the clouds of heaven. Moses himself

recalled 40 years later in Deuteronomy that it was a unique event. He says, “For who is there of all flesh, that has heard the voice of the living God speaking out of the midst of fire, as we have, and lived?” (Deuteronomy 5:26).

So, let’s consider the context of this majestic event. The setting is first of all a gracious setting, secondly a covenantal setting, and thirdly a solemn setting. Let’s begin with the first one, a gracious setting. It seems to be a rather startling observation. Gracious? Yes, the 10 Commandments are framed in the context of grace. Exodus 20 is preceded by Exodus 1 through 19, and in those chapters we have the history of God’s gracious redemption of Israel out of the land of Egypt. Back in Exodus 4, God speaks to Moses through the burning bush, and He says, “Israel is my son, even my firstborn” (verse 22). ‘It’s my adopted son.’ That’s only grace. That’s based on no other thing but grace. Moses reminded Israel of that repeatedly, particularly 40 years later in Deuteronomy 7. He says, ‘Don’t forget. “The LORD did not set his love upon you, nor choose you, because you were more in number than any people; for you were the fewest of all people” (verse 7). I picked you up only out of grace.’

In Exodus 19, as you noticed as you read the chapter, He compares Himself to that eagle carrying her fledglings. So, God says, “you have seen how I bare you as on eagle’s wings, and brought you unto myself” (verse 4). That’s a graciousness: I brought you unto myself. It was important, therefore, that Israel would never forget this gracious setting. And therefore, God begins the 10 Commandments with this beautiful preamble. The introduction speaks about His omnipotent grace whereby He delivered them, “I am the LORD thy God, that brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage” (verse 2).

Now that’s not only important for Israel to hear. It’s important for us to hear today who have been saved by God’s delivering grace from our spiritual bondage. Also, we are to remember that it’s grace, grace alone as John Newton so beautifully captured in his well-known song, ‘Amazing grace that saved a wretch like me.’ So, friends, for us it is extremely important when we look at the 10 Commandments that we never divorce them from this gracious setting. The 10 Commandments are not a restatement of the covenant of works. It is not like God spoke to Adam and Eve, “Do this, and you shall live.” No, God says, ‘It’s because you live and because I redeemed you, therefore keep my commandments so that the relationship, the life we have together, may flourish, may deepen, may endure as well.

So, secondly, it was a covenantal setting. All what the Lord has done with Israel was covenantal. Exodus 2 ends with the words, when God hears the Israelites groaning in the Egyptian bondage, and then it says, “God remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob. And God looked upon the children of Israel, and God had respect unto them” (verses 24-25). Later on, Moses recalls this again in Deuteronomy 7:8 after all that took place in Egypt. He says it was ‘because,’ he wrote, ‘he would keep the oath which he had sworn unto your fathers. Therefore God brought you out of Egypt.’ [It’s a] covenantal setting. [A] covenant is a special and a personal relationship in which two parties bind themselves together with promises, vows, to one another.

Think of your marriage covenant. Each party makes a solemn promise and accepts the responsibilities and the conditions that belong to the relationship, or to the covenant. God has always dealt with mankind in a covenantal way. With Adam and Eve, as we have seen, it was the covenant of works. Based on their obedience, would the relationship flourish and deepen. So is God’s relationship with Israel based on a covenantal grace relationship. When God in Exodus 19:5-6 approached Israel, notice that He seeks their consent to the covenant which He [had] already initiated with them. Listen to these words, “Now therefore, if you will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine: and ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation.” And all the people readily respond, “All that the LORD has spoken we shall do” (verse 8). They meant it sincerely, until three days later when they realized how this holy God is so far removed from them.

There’s something very unique about this covenant, this grace covenant between God and His people Israel. It’s unequal. The holy God is in covenant with unholy people. That’s the riches of the gospel. The people felt instantly how impossible this relationship is. It’s not on equal footing. We felt this in Exodus 20:18 [where] we read, ‘Seeing the thunder and lightning and hearing the noise of the trumpet, they stood back and they trembled exceedingly and asked Moses that the Lord would no more speak with them but with him instead.’ Immediately, God answered this and revealed to Moses the first elementary revelation of the tabernacle in a very crude altar that Moses was commanded to make.

Now, the third thing about the covenant [is that] it is one-sided. It is one-sided in the establishment as well as in the execution. God initiated the covenant. God sovereignly defines the rules of the relationship in this covenant. God proves to be the faithful party in this covenant. Israel's history is a continued story of spiritual adultery and unfaithfulness, but God never broke His covenant with Israel. It's so one-sided.

And so, the third thing about this covenant [is that] it's grace-based instead of works-based. That doesn't mean that God doesn't require obedience, of course, but the obedience of us is not the basis of the covenant. God promised on His own grace to be their covenant God forever, even until today. Romans 11:28 says that the Jews remained the beloved for the fathers' sakes.

So, friends, to wrap this up let us keep in mind that when we look at Exodus 19 and 20, the Lord did not initiate His covenant relationship with Israel. He only formally confirmed it or enshrined it in the 10 Commandments. The preamble we already looked at reflects that, as well as the repeated statement throughout the 10 Commandments, "the Lord thy God." In the version of Deuteronomy 5, you notice that is repeated nine times. God stresses it, "I am the LORD your God." [It's a] relationship.

Now, let's ponder for a moment that it all means to us. We are no more [at] Mount Horeb. We are no Israelites or Jews. [Most of us] are [of Gentile] origin. What significance does all this have for us, the New Testament people of God? Is God really speaking to us in the same way as He spoke to His people gathered at Mount Sinai? The answer is emphatically, "Yes." Already in Deuteronomy 5 (this is 40 years later with mostly a new generation of people standing at the audience of Moses; many weren't even born when God came on Mount Sinai), Moses said, "The Lord made this covenant not with your fathers but with us, here alive this day" (verse 3).

So, fast-forward to the apostles Paul and Peter, who draw the line of God's covenant from Abraham to the New Testament church in some sweeping statements. [In] Galatians 3:29 what does Paul call the Galatians? Gentiles of origin. [There's] not any Jewish blood in them. He calls them "Abraham's seed." Hear this, verse 29 of chapter 3, "And if ye be Christ's, then you're Abraham's seed, and you're heirs according to the promise," according to the covenant. So, whether you're a Jew or a Greek, bond or free, male or female, if in Christ, we are Abraham's seed. In chapter 4:28, he repeats it again, except then he calls the Galatian believers born of heathen parents, "Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise."

[In] Romans 11, the apostle Paul uses a different picture. He compares Israel of old to the root, the stem, and the New Testament church, the Gentile believers, are like branches grafted into that stem. The New Testament church didn't replace the Old Testament church. The New Testament church is the expansion of the Old Testament church as God predicted in many prophecies, even Psalms in the Old Testament already. And, all this is all in line with what the apostle Peter preached on the day of Pentecost.

Filled and moved by the Holy Spirit, Peter takes the line of the Old Testament prophets, and he extends it forward to the worldwide church today in these words, "For the promise is unto you," standing in front of him, "and to your children," and perhaps many of them standing there too, "and to all that are afar off," to whom they have to still go to preach, "even as many as the LORD our God shall call" (Acts 2:39). And you notice he draws a line from Abraham onward to the New Testament church. Therefore, friends, within the New Testament church, the same Jehovah God is at work [Who] was at work in the Old Testament church, gathering His elect, from that church then [and] from the worldwide church today.

And, that means that each time and you and I today hear the preamble of the 10 Commandments, we ought to remind ourselves, as Israel [was] to remind themselves, of what God did. They were delivered out of the Egyptian bondage; we have been delivered out of the spiritual bondage. Once we were dead in trespasses and sin in the bondage to sin and Satan, and Paul exhorted the [redeemed] never to forget where they once were, like Ephesians 2:11-13, where he writes, "Wherefore remember," recall it, don't forget, "that ye," at that time, "in times past were Gentiles in the flesh ... that at that time, you were without Christ. You were aliens from the commonwealth of Israel. You were strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world: but now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ." The Jews' and Gentiles' churches merge together as one.

Now, can you yourself make the inevitable conclusion if it is the same covenant, if we participate in a similar deliverance, [an] even greater deliverance, [then] the moral law must also have the same place in the life of God's redeemed as it had for Israel. Today it is not and never will be the way to life anymore, but it still is the way of life,

to preserve, to nurture, to deepen the relationship with God. And that, briefly, brings me to the last observation, which was a very solemn setting, that day on Mount Sinai [that] came with the most extraordinary revelation God has ever made.

Psalms 68:17 states about that day, "The chariots of God are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels: the Lord is among them, as in Sinai, in the holy place." Chief among all these angels was God Himself. He presented Himself clearly in the most awe-inspiring majesty the world had ever seen until that day. No part of Scripture, friends, has ever been uttered so much more impressively than the Mount Sinai 10 Commandments. Never did people ever hear the voice of God speak out of the midst of fire as Israel has heard then, as Moses says in Deuteronomy 4:33. "God talked with you face to face in the mount, out of the midst of fire," he says in Deuteronomy 5:4. And no other part of Scripture has ever been written like the 10 Commandments, with His own finger. God later on wrote it in the tables of stone and gave them to Moses.

So then, let us conclude with this question, 'What is now the reason God proclaimed the 10 commandments in such great majesty?' There are three reasons. First, think for a moment with me. If God was and is this God of love, and if the laws are the reflection of His most holy and lovely nature, why did He make Himself feel so unapproachable when He displayed Himself in this fire, in this incredible glory and majesty that made everybody fear and quake? The death penalty would be even on animals that innocently trespassed that boundary mark. Why would God state this lovely law in such negative tones? "Thou shalt not. Thou shalt not." There are three reasons.

First, God is now dealing with sinners. Even though redeemed from Egypt and even though in covenant with Him, the people who are standing there in front of Him on Mount Sinai are sinners. They have a distorted view of God. They have a distorted view of themselves, still. Their thoughts of God [are] way too low. Their thoughts of themselves [are] way too high. Therefore, God needs to display Himself in this very glorious majesty. Later on, God needed to charge Israel when He has a controversy with them. He says this: "Thou thought [that] I was altogether like as you" (Psalm 50:21). 'You put me on the same level, but so I am not.'

And therefore, God indeed may display Himself, friends, that the familiarity in which He comes near to us and dwells among us does not lead to a contempt of the great majesty and glory that we ought to display to Him. Hebrews 12 reiterates that, 'God is a consuming fire. Let us therefore come before him with reverence and godly fear' (verses 29 and 28). Therefore, Jesus teaches us in the disciples' prayer the first petition, "Our Father which art in heaven," the distance [and] the closeness, "our Father."

So, the second reason that God is so majestic in this address is that He is addressing His people in a very dangerous, tempting, broken world. Many forces are standing around Israel here that are seeking to destroy the beauty of their spiritual marriage, and therefore God needed to expound the law in such a forceful manner, just like a parent speaking to a young child who has no idea about the dangers around them, who doesn't see what is so dangerous. And so as a parent, we say, "Don't go across the fence. Don't go through that gate. Don't go with strangers. Don't accept their gifts." Now, that is not negative, but that is forceful because of the condition of the child. And so, God also as a caring parent, phrases the 10 Commandments in that manner.

And the third reason for this impressive presentation of God's high standard is as we already saw: to use the law as a schoolmaster to bring them to Jesus Christ. Instantly, the people seeing this and hearing God speak feel [that] this is not safe, to listen and to speak and to be near to God. It says, "When the people saw it, they removed, they stood afar off. And they pleaded with Moses, Speak thou with us, and we will hear: but let not God speak with us, lest we die" (Exodus 20:18-19). That was not a negative response. That was a good response.

In Deuteronomy 18, the Lord revealed to Moses this; the Lord said, "It is well spoken" (verse 17), that which they have spoken back then in Mount Sinai. And He promises them to raise up a prophet from among their brethren like unto them (verse 18). And we see Jesus Christ later, approachable, gentle, not lifting up His voice loudly [and] scaring them, but alluring them, drawing them. You see, that's what they felt the need for, and that's why God also in this presentation displayed Himself in that majesty, to make them feel the need for the Mediator.

Friends, having come now to the foot of the Mount Sinai, it's time for us to begin to listen to the 10 Commandments one after the other. And in the series of lectures that are coming now, I hope to take you to each of the commandments in one lecture, to look, to listen, to ponder 'What is the will of Jehovah so that the relationship between Him and His people will remain beautiful, glorious, lovely, close, satisfying, enjoyable?'

And what those specifics of the will of God are, we will look at in our next lectures.

So, may God bless all we have learned so far and multiply it manifold. Thank you.

Lecture 8

THE FIRST COMMANDMENT

And God spake all these words, saying...and then follows the Ten. No God is greater than the Creator of heaven and earth and no law is better than the Ten Commandments. Moses reminded the people of Israel of that when in his parting message he said, And what nation is there so great, that hath statutes and judgments, so righteous as all this law, which I set before you this day? Yet despite this truth of having the best of the laws, God knew the heart of His people. It was necessary to open His commandments to love Him with the commanding them never to leave Him.

TRANSCRIPT LECTURE 8

Welcome, dear friends. Today we will make a beginning with examining the 10 Commandments, one commandment per lecture. I have titled this first one on the first commandment with *Trust Me Only*. And of course, it's based on Exodus chapter 20, the first commandment as it reads, "Thou shalt have no other gods before me." I intend to set up the lectures on the 10 Commandments with introducing, on every one of the commandments, a general principle first. And then, this major part of the lecture will be devoted to looking at the individual commandments.

So, the first principle I want to share with you today is a basic one that states that the 10 Commandments [are] the foundational and the fundamental law of God for all people at all times. You could consider them like the Constitution or the charter of a nation. The ten are God's absolute and moral and eternal revealed will, not just for the Israelites but for all people that He has created. [The] Old Testament already speaks very often about the fact that God is the King of all nations. And though He gave the 10 Commandments specifically to the Israelites, it was intended indeed to be His will for all people.

Now, fundamental and foundational law: in the legal world there is a distinction between base law and case law. There are fancier words for that, but I will omit those. Consider the 10 Commandments as the base law, the official laws given by God as the constitution of the kingdom. [The case law is made] on the basis of the base law. They are laws that are flowing out of the [base] law as, sometimes, more refined applications in the variety of situations we meet. In the Old Testament, we have quite a number of civil laws that are phrased with "If, then." Those are examples of case laws. For example, "thou shalt not steal," is the base law. There's a case law: If my ox is trampling the field of my neighbor and destroying his harvest, then I have to make restitution. That is a case law based on the 10 Commandments.

Now, this distinction will help you to understand that not all the civil laws that are given us in the Old Testament books are necessarily, word for word, applicable to us today. Some of them are framed in the society and the culture of Israel of old, or of the wilderness journey, or of when they have settled in Canaan. And yet, to

underline this importance of the base law, let us remember that God spoke the base law Himself. The 10 Commandments were directly spoken from heaven, were written twice in the tables of the law by God's own finger. They are absolute for all mankind.

Let us now look at the first commandment together. "Thou shalt have no other gods before me." There [are] two things we want to consider: What is God's basic intent for the first commandment, and what are the details of this first commandment? Why did God give and start the 10 Commandments with this particular "thou shall have no other gods before me?" He doesn't mean, 'Among all the gods that there are, have Me only as your God. I'm yours. I'm the most important. I'm the only One to Whom you really ought to devote yourself.' Well, that in a sense is true, but God knows, friends, what He says Himself in Isaiah 43:11, "I, even I, am the LORD; and besides me there is no savior." There is no God, there is no God at all, beside Me.

So therefore, God did not write the first commandment to somehow secure Himself against competition. There is no competition. There is no other competitor who can stand up to the glory and the honor of God. Though, of course, there are many forces that seek to draw us away: Satan and his agents and all the temptations. But, there is no other God besides God Himself.

God is very scathing about every idol. For example, in Jeremiah 10:3-5, He does almost make a mockery of it when He says, 'Now, they take a tree, and they cut it down, and they take a chunk of the tree, and they make it into an image. The rest of it they make firewood (Isaiah 44:14-20). They cover the image with gold and silver. They nail it to a board. They have to carry it.' There's nothing to fear from a scarecrow god like that. And therefore, as God has given this characterization of the idols, notice how He ends that passage. He says, "Be not afraid of them; for they cannot do evil, neither also is it in them to do good." Now, that last statement leads me to share with you what is God's real intent in the first commandment.

God commands, 'Acknowledge Me. Trust Me only. Follow Me only as the only God Who can do you good.' God says, 'Look. I am your devoted Creator. I have all the resources to guide you through this wilderness of this life. Have no other gods. Acknowledge, trust, honor Me only.' On a different level, God could say to His people Israel, 'I am your Redeemer. I took you out of Egypt. Trust no other deity than Me only.' Or on a different level, God can say, 'I am the caring Father standing before His children and this dangerous world. Don't go with others. Have Me only.' Why? 'The others can do you no good. You don't have to be afraid of them, but they don't do you any good either.'

So, with loving devotion, God sets out His will for us in this first commandment. As we say to our children, 'Don't go with strangers,' so God says, 'Don't go with strangers. Don't follow strange gods, no matter how sweet they talk, no matter what they promise you, no matter how they look or what they tell you. Don't trust anyone [and] don't trust anything to take care of you, to lead you, or to counsel you, or to protect you, but Me only.' Don't we say that to our children? That's what God says to His children, 'Don't give your heart to other lovers.' Why? You will experience loss. You will experience disappointment. They will let you down. You will experience pain.

Friends, as we trace the history of Israel, you'll see it again and again. The gods that they followed dropped them like a stone. They couldn't help them at all in the needs they faced. So, God requires that we give Him our complete loyalty and devotion by trusting Him only. Doing that will give you and me the greatest freedom and happiness to enjoy. Why? Well, then we aren't in the grip of these magic forces. Then we aren't following vain and useless people, [and] we [don't] place our trust in flimsy securities. Then we will not be tossed up and down in the world of constant change.

"Have no other gods before me." Do you see what I see? Do you sense what I sense? Not only in the first, but we'll see it in all other nine commandments. I don't see God putting me in a harness to hinder me [or] to restrict me, but to protect me. I don't see a God that is unconcerned about what I feel, but I feel a divine concern in Him for me to be truly happy and satisfied. I don't see a desperate or a fearful God trying to secure Himself as the *number one*, but I see and sense a God Who is seeking to secure us from harm and hurt when we don't follow Him as the only One. "Thou shalt have no other gods before me." So, let's then consider what are the implications and the details of this first commandment. What does God command and, by implication, forbid?

First then, God commands us that we would know Him and trust Him only. Now, to know and to trust are following each other. I can't trust someone I don't know. In all relationships, trust is based on the knowledge of the person, and so it is with God. We tell our children and warn them not to trust strangers that they don't know,

though indeed we also have to warn them not to trust those they do know. In this sick world, so many are indeed taking advantage of [trusted] relationships and [leading] others into abuse that way. But generally, we tell people, “Don’t trust anyone that you don’t know.” That’s what God’s will is in the first commandment. He commands us to know Him. He commands us that we would learn to know Him more and more, and acknowledge Him as the only God in heaven and in earth.

To know Him, friends, is a task. It’s also a never ending study. And the more that we know Him and see His greatness, His wisdom, His goodness, His devotion, His holiness, and His justice, and all the attributes, His loving kindness, more and more we will be drawn to cling to Him, to follow Him, and to trust in Him even when things are rough and tough in life, or even when someone else knocks on our door and says, ‘Give me your heart. Follow me.’ If we know Him, why would we forsake Him Who has so devoted Himself to us, the God of heaven, the Creator, the Redeemer? Now, none honored the first commandment more than Jesus. And notice that Satan starts in the wilderness tempting Jesus to break the first commandment. Faced with hunger and weakness, faced with the incredulous people that He has to go now and preach and introduce Himself to as the Messiah, and pressed with the ultimate prospect of the cross, Satan tempts Him in a variety of ways. Finally, Jesus rejects each attempt of the adversary to place His trust first in Himself, in His own resources, make bread (Matt. 4:3), or in people by His own doings, or ultimately in Satan’s promise, ‘Just bow down, and I will leave and give it all to you.’ No, Jesus knew and trusted and looked and obeyed His Father only, and He sent Satan away with a final appeal to the first commandment: Satan, “Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve” (Matt. 4:10).

So secondly, God commands us to worship and to glorify Him as the only God. When I hear the word *worship*, maybe you’re like me, we think of church, of singing and praying, giving, preaching, or hearing the Word. And yet, the heart of worship is a heart which trusts and lives a life that shows obedience to God as the only God, as the worthiest Being. So, what does worship really look like, friend? It’s not just when we are in church. Worship is to stand in awe of Him. Worship is to choose Him above all others, and comforts and delights, as the God to Whom I devote myself. Worship is to place our hope in Him, to joyfully serve Him alone. Worship is to submit to His will and His ways above my own, even if it’s difficult. Worship is to humble myself under His mighty hand. Worship is to devote my talents to Him. Worship is to be zealous for His cause and for His kingdom, to wait on Him as we seek directions in ways we need to go or His counsel. And ultimately, it is to delight ourselves in Him and Who He is as He reveals Himself in His Word and His providence.

Now, if we honor God with such worship, looking, waiting, seeking, we will experience He will never fail. He will not fail us. He will guide us in His love, uphold us and provide. Psalm 81 is a brilliant example of it. God says, ‘Open your mouth wide, and I will fill your every need.’ He laments in that psalm, ‘Oh, that my people would have hearkened unto me. They went with strange gods, and they were lost. I would have satisfied them with the finest of the wheat and honey out of the rock.’ You see, that’s the first commandment: worship Me.

Now, God, therefore, in the third place commands us to turn away and to keep away from [looking to] anyone or anything above Him for help or guidance. Many people in trouble and fears, look to the stars or to the moon, or [to] sorcery or cultic forces, think of King Saul, or take their horoscope or witchcraft, or call on so-called saints. Others take their refuge in ideas and philosophies and speculations or traditions that reject or contradict the Word of God and the teachings of His Word. The apostle Paul warns already in his days about the days that were coming when “some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of the devils” (I Timothy 4:1). Now, that would be a violation of the first commandment when we give ourselves for security and for guidance, for help, to such forces or such sources. Instead, God says, ‘Have no other gods. Have Me only.’ So, friends, keep reminding yourself why God is commanding us the first commandment. He is not afraid He’ll be losing something of His glory. He is concerned that you and I will lose nothing. Our soul and body we will lose when we exchange the truth for a lie.

So, let’s conclude then with considering what God forbids in the first commandment. There are many possible answers, and I will bypass most of them to focus in on only one. God forbids, of course, atheism, which is the belief that says there is no God, and therefore we don’t have to worry about that. God also rejects and forbids pantheism, which is the belief that everything we see and touch around us is God. He also forbids evolutionism,

in which ultimately you're taught that you are God. But, I bypass those three. Let us focus on one sin [that's] much more closer to our heart: He forbids idolatry.

And what is idolatry? Essentially, idolatry is when we put the creature or any other creature comforts above God in the place of the Creator, and we define our comfort or our strength or our security in things, or creatures, whatever it is. The Heidelberg Catechism defines idolatry in Question 95 as follows, "Idolatry is instead of or besides that one true God Who has manifested Himself in His Word to design or to have any other object in which men place their trust." Now, don't forget or confuse that idolatry is not the same as loving or trusting your people around you that are close to you, like your parents or your spouse or your pastor. That's not idolatry. Idolatry also is not enjoying the beautiful things that God has given us, such as marriage, family, or food and drink, or business, or possessions, or work, so, things we may enjoy. But, idolatry is when these things or these people begin to define our trust or our happiness, or we build our security and we give our devotion to this, in the first place, instead of on God.

Now, therefore, don't think that idolatry is only when we serve stone images or depend on the departed spirits of men. Examine yourself and stay alert to the truth that idolatry is far more refined and, therefore, so much harder to detect in our own hearts. We break the first commandment when we take good and lawful things given for our enjoyment and devote ourselves to them in such an extent that they become more than what God should be. Let me just give you a few examples to think this through further in your own life.

Wealth, possessions, is a gift, but it becomes a snaring idol when I am working harder and harder just to become wealthy, to secure myself or to build a better tomorrow, simply to enjoy myself. Now, wealth has become an idol, rather than a resource given to glorify God and serve my neighbor. Academic success is good and a wonderful aim to work towards to skill yourself better intellectually with the talents that God has given you. It becomes an idol when all I care about is status and titles, and the prestige that [comes] with my titles or my positions. And now, I'm thinking of financial benefits, perhaps, more than honor and the praise of God in the service to my fellow man. That's an idol.

Physical fitness and health [are] a great thing [and] something we all are to do to keep [ourselves] fit to do the work of God, but it becomes an idol when all I want to do is look fit and trim, to show off my body or to somehow lengthen my life indefinitely in the hopes that it will be long. Think about sports and games. Again, they have a great place and a good use, but especially in modern-day, mankind's greatest idol has become in that area of sports and entertainment. It's no more recreational. It is idolatry. It's all about winning and performing and medals and ribbons of our favorite team or ourselves.

But, let's find one more idol: Christian ministry. That can easily become an idol when I aim at reputation and reward, rather than at usefulness that He may increase, and I may decrease or fade away. So together, the first commandment, let's listen to the words of exhortation that Moses writes in Deuteronomy 8 when he speaks about them not forgetting God when they're full and successful and when multiplied and their hearts are lifted up and they forget the Lord their God that has brought them forth out of the land of Egypt (Deut. 8:11-14), and he concludes then with these warnings in Deuteronomy 8:17-19, "And thou say in thine heart, My power and the might of mine hand has gotten me this wealth. But thou shalt remember the LORD thy God: for it is he that giveth thee power to get wealth, that he may establish his covenant which he sware unto thy fathers, as it is this day. And it shall be, if thou do at all forget the LORD thy God, and walk after other gods, and shall serve them, and worship them, I testify against you this day that ye shall surely perish."

There we have it again, 'My people, don't go with these gods. Don't put your trust in them. Don't look to them. They will not help you. Have me only.' Now, do you taste in that God's love, God's concern? Following His will and honoring Him as the only One, friends, will bring us the greatest joy, happiness, security, provision. For they that honor Me, I will honor. It will give us freedom from worry, disappointment, and finally, from perishing at the end of our journey.

I encourage you in every commandment to take a little visit to the Westminster Catechism or the Heidelberg Catechism and to read for yourself the questions and answers, [in] which they have [condensed, and] written very beautifully and richly, the meaning of each one of the commandments. Thank you very much.

Lecture 9

THE SECOND COMMANDMENT

Every direction in life begins the same way. It always begins with one step or one choice. They may seem small and insignificant. Yet the result of the first step will not be known till we have reached the end of our journey. By that time, it is usually too late to reverse our course. Our caring Creator, however, knows the end from the beginning. He knows where even the slightest misrepresentation of Him and His character will lead to. Changing the glory of God into an image of something created isn't only dishonoring but destructive of ourselves but also for our descendants.

TRANSCRIPT LECTURE 9

Welcome, dear friends. It is my privilege again to take you into a commandment of the Lord, and today I have titled my lecture based on the second commandment as *Worship Me Honorably*. And, the Scripture on which this will be based is of course found in Exodus 20:4–6, where God says, “Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that which is in the water under the earth: And 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 unto the third and the fourth generation of them that hate me; and showing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments.” The second commandment, along with the fourth commandment, [is] the longest in the ten. That may indicate something of the importance of these two and the impact that honoring or dishonoring this particular direction of God has upon us and our children. So therefore, I think it's important for us to understand well what are the implications of the second commandment.

Before we look at the details of the second, I want to introduce to you a second principle dealing with the law of God in general. And the second principle is that the 10 Commandments are divided over two tables. Obviously, Moses had two tables given by God, as it is recorded in Exodus 31, “And he gave unto Moses, when he had made an end of communing with him upon Mount Sinai, two tables of testimony, tables of stone written with the finger of God” (verse 18). Now, the content of each of these tables can be concluded from Jesus's statement in Matthew 22 when He gives in answer to the Pharisee the original law of God, as we have looked at earlier. And the first table would spell out our duty towards God, containing there the four commandments of the ten. And the second table spells out our duty towards our neighbor, the remaining six commandments.

What we must not do with this division is to make it a more or less value, like the first table is more valuable than the second table. Jesus's words really contradict that. He says the first table is great. He didn't say greater. He says the second table is like unto the first, not lesser than the first. So, let's resist the tendency to take the second table commandments less [seriously] than the first table commandments. That there are two tables must have a

reason, and the reason is to establish an order and a basis in our devotional love and obedience. The love to God clearly is to take precedence over our love to father, mother, brother, sister, family member, as Jesus indicates in Luke chapter 14. Our love to God also is to be foundational to the love to our neighbor. The love to God is to flow into the love to the neighbors, God's creatures, around us. So, that is the division of the two, and that is an important distinction to keep in mind, the two tables of the law of God.

Now, let's turn our attention to the second commandment. And, there [are] four aspects that we will consider with each other. What is God's intent? What does He forbid? What does He command? And let's not forget that intention in both those aspects. And fourthly, how does He enforce both aspects of the second commandment?

So, first then, what is God's intention? And let's again begin and always continue to remind ourselves when we look at the 10 Commandments to look at [them] through the heart of the lawgiver, to begin with Him and what is reflected in these 10 Commandments. So, why did God give us the second commandment? The first answer is correct. It's His sovereign will. Correct, God isn't bound by anything. God isn't bound by anyone. He is the supreme lawgiver, and who are we to question that?

But there's a second answer we can give. God cares about us, and He cares about our children and our grandchildren and the generations to come. And, God knows that every departure from Him, be it ever so small, becomes bigger with time. Every departure begins the same way. It begins with one small step onto a slippery slope. No act of disobedience is innocent, but the disobedience to the second commandment is never done in isolation. It affects, as you will see, the third and the fourth generation, at least. And the honoring of it will affect thousands, as you will see, not just individuals but generations.

So again, do you notice what I notice? That God commands the largeness of His mercy [to] thousands, while He assigned His vengeance, just vengeance, to only four generations, [unto] the third and the fourth generation. Everywhere in Scripture where you also look, even in the 10 Commandments, again and again, do you notice you cannot omit to see the glory and devotion of the God of grace and love as His beauty shines through all His works and all His words? So, let's consider then what God forbids us in the second.

In the first, He revealed His will for us to worship Him in trust and obedience as the only true God. Now, in the second commandment He expands on the first. We are to worship Him in a worthy manner. We are to worship Him in a manner that reflects that we understand and know His glory. In other words, in the first commandment we are to worship the correct God, the only One. In the second commandment, God details for us that we are to worship the correct God correctly, or honorably. So, what is that then to worship God correctly or honorably? Well, God has given us the clear direction. You do that without the use of images or pictures of Me. Clearly, He forbids us to make any image, likeness, borrowed out of the heavens, on the earth, or under the earth, to somehow picture Him.

Moses reminded the Israelites repeatedly in the book of Deuteronomy that God spoke face-to-face with Israel, yet didn't show Himself, didn't give us any image of His likeness. I suspect that Moses is like us. He also desired to see God. He asked Him at one point, "Behold, Lord, show me thy glory." And God answers him, you can read it in Exodus 33 and 34, God says, 'Moses, you can't see my face: for there shall no man see me, and live. Instead, I will proclaim,' words, 'all my goodness. I will pass by, and I will proclaim the name of the LORD.' And then, in Exodus 34, you can read when Moses stands there, that God comes by and He proclaims His name.

There's something remarkable about what God says in that particular passage, so let me read it. He said, "The LORD, The LORD God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy unto thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that by no means will clear the guilty; visiting the iniquity of the fathers unto the third and fourth generation." Do you notice how similar that revelation of God to Moses is to the second commandment? So, God forbids us to make any representation or image of Himself.

Why? Well, that's His sovereign will. True. But secondly, God knows that any imagination, or any representation or any image, no matter how sophisticated and no matter how artistic and colorful, dishonors or degrades His glory. For how can we make He Who is a spirit and invisible, He Who is omnipresent and infinite, into something picture, something stone, something artistic? The only visible representation that God gave of Himself to Israel was the tabernacle, later on replaced with the temple, but ultimately replaced by the living Son of Man, Jesus Christ. Hebrews 1:3 describes Jesus as the brightness of God's glory and the express image of His

Son. Colossians 1:15 even refers to Jesus as the image of the invisible God, and that alone is the way that God revealed Himself visibly to us.

It's remarkable, however, that when you read through all the gospel stories, that the gospel writers never tell us whether Jesus was tall or short, stocky or slim. We have not a single clue what He looked like, except what His character was like. He was meek, lowly in spirit, gentle, caring, loving, compassionate, merciful, gracious, serving, all character issues which showed forth in His actions. That is the glory of God, for that reveals to us the devotional, loving character of the Almighty. And any picture and any representation of Him somehow visibly is a dishonor.

So, none of us ought to think to be wiser than God thinking that a representation of God in an image will make us feel closer to Him. If that is true, friends, God would have done the opposite of the second commandment, but God knows that any attempt to picture Him will lead people astray, and that's what His main purpose is. He doesn't want us to be led astray by a misrepresentation of His character or of His person in a limited visual representation. And history has confirmed it. Any time, from the days of Moses, when people began to picture God, beginning with the golden calf, [then] they would go astray and hurt themselves deeply, spiritually, as well as, of course, dishonor God.

So secondly, we are to worship Him without making a mental image of God that misrepresents Him as well. Idolatry is not only done with a stone image or statute. Idolatry is also done when we make a mental image of God and worship Him in a different way than what He has revealed Himself to be. In Psalm 50, God charges the Israelites with saying, "Thou thought I was altogether such an one as thyself." Now, that's a mental misrepresentation. So we dishonor, friends, God when we create a mental image of Him according to our liking, according to one that fits us. We may do this unaware, or we may do this purposely. But, both of them are nonetheless sinful. And therefore, please examine your own thinking about God according to the second commandment.

Do we worship Him correctly, honorably? We dishonor Him when we worship Him as if He is not sovereign over everyone's life. We dishonor Him if we worship Him as if He is not holy and righteous in all His ways and doings, or [as] if He is not truthful to His Word or [changes] His standards of right and wrong. But we likewise misrepresent Him if we think of Him only as a God of love, not concerned about sin, just love, indulging everyone. But we also misrepresent Him when we go the other way. He's only a God of anger, a God of harsh, cold, indifference. All such are misrepresentations of God, and what do they do? They lead us astray. Yes, they dishonor Him, but they also hurt us as we are straying away from the real, true God of heaven. Please keep in mind that these commandments are God's caring revelation of love to keep us on the straight and narrow way that leadeth to life.

So then thirdly, let's consider what God commands us in the second. He commands us to worship Him appropriately. Now when we heard the word *worship*, we right away think of church. We think of singing, praying, reading the Word, preaching, listening. That's not incorrect, but the word *worship* is far broader than a church gathering. Worship is doing what we were created to do. It is reflecting the God Who we were meant to reflect. That's already worship, how we live. How we bear out the image of Him is worship.

Now, friends, we dishonor Him when we don't reflect His glory in His devotional love, in His patience, in His being ready to forgive. We dishonor when that image of God is not reflected in our own lifestyle. When we in meekness turn the other cheek to someone who has offended us, that's God-like. When we involve ourselves in sacrificial ministry and pour ourselves into a priestly love, that's God-like. That's second commandment worship. When our walk is according to His will in all purity and sincerity, you see, then we are reflecting Him honorably. So, anyone ought to ask themselves, 'How do I reflect God's glory and honor as a husband, as a wife, as a father, as a mother, as a child, as a servant, as a traveler, or as a shopper, or as a visitor?' Can they see in me the reflection of [Him Whose image] I bear?

So, such a lifestyle of daily personal and also family worship will overflow itself in the weekly worship services, and the services should never be man-centered. Our church services ought to be God-centered, Word-based, Spirit-filled. Our friends and attendees who come and share this time of worship with us, they ought to walk away with an impression, 'Surely, God is in this place,' what Jacob said about Bethel. The unbelievers who see God's people in corporate worship, they ought to be stirred to ask the question, 'What makes them so expressive in their singing? What makes these people so trustful and childlike and confident in prayer? What makes

them so attentive to the explanation of the Word of God? What makes them so sincere in sharing, in ministry? And what makes them express their thanksgiving with this humility and with this awe?' That is reflecting in our worship services something of the glory of God. That's what God requires in the second commandment.

Now lastly then, let's consider how God reinforced the importance of this commandment. You notice He builds into this commandment the statement that I am a jealous God. That's no negative statement. God's jealousy is the intensity of His love to His own character and glory. No one would feel ill when a husband feels jealous when someone gives his wife affection or adoration and intrudes himself into his relationship. Then, he feels jealous. As a matter of fact, it is spoken about 'as the rage of man is the jealousy of love' (Proverbs 6:34). So, God says, "I am a jealous God." He is jealous about His glory. That's perfectly legitimate. It would be a fault in God as it is a fault in us when we are not jealous about our honor and about our loved ones. God is the greatest. None is as great, as good, as devoted, as glorious as He. None of us will accept misrepresentation or dishonor to our character, and so, God says, "I am jealous."

And, friends, let us heed, therefore, what Moses writes about God's jealousy in Deuteronomy 6. I'll read it to you, a portion of verse 13 to 15, "Thou shalt fear the LORD thy God and serve him;... (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." And you see that that rage of God's jealousy has been intense upon the people of Israel. But then secondly, He not only states that He's jealous, [but] He also states and warns us what will happen when we misrepresent Him. He says that the effects of a misrepresentation, a dishonorable worship, will affect our generations to come. It will be disastrous for the generations to come. God will visit the iniquity of the fathers to the second commandment upon the children unto the third and the fourth generation.

Let's count the cost of misrepresenting Him in the eyes of those we lead, fathers, mothers, us teachers and preachers. What is the cost? Well, when I take one little step away from the character representation of God, my children will take two or three steps, and the grandchildren will take more steps. It's an increasing departure that God is warning us about. They follow our footsteps, or perhaps they even step out of our footsteps to go farther astray from where we have led them astray. Sin and lies always grow bigger, and God sees this happening. He says, 'Oh, My people, don't misrepresent Me because I see the disastrous results upon your children and grandchildren when you exchange the glory of God with a misrepresentation of Me.'

Not often do we read in the Scriptures that the Lord Jesus became angry, but may I highlight twice that He became angry? First, with the disciples when they hindered the children from coming to Him. Why was He so angry? Because they misrepresented Him and His Father as if He wasn't interested in children, as if they don't belong to [those who may] hear [about the] kingdom and hear about the kingdom grace. And the second time that Jesus was angry is when He saw how the temple of His Father was dishonored. They made a house of prayer and worship a house of merchandise and profit, and that wasn't reflecting on them. That was reflecting on His Father's glory, Who is a God of mercy and a God of goodness. And then, Jesus becomes angry.

But notice that the second commandment concludes with an encouragement. Those that honor me, I will honor, "showing mercy unto thousands that love me and keep my commandments." Now friends, the thousands are not just individuals. It's thousands of generations as Deuteronomy 7:9 points out. So what God is saying [is] 'When you honor Me and worship Me correctly, this is going to affect thousands of generations.' [As a] group, the nation will be affected as we lead people in the correct way of worshiping God. I said earlier, notice the contrast again. God is avenging in justice, the misrepresentation to the third and the fourth generation, but yet He extends His mercy to thousands of generations. That's one more remarkable thing here. The fact that God mentions the word *mercy* in the context of a lawbook.

Mercy doesn't belong [in] the lawbook. The law sets boundaries, spells out requirements and consequences, but it doesn't deal with mercy. But God reveals in His lawbook the glory of His merciful and gracious character. He knows our frame. He understands that even with the best of our efforts, we fail. We remain sinners. Though we are created in His image, we are fallen. And even though there is grace, we're not perfect. And therefore, the best parents and the best teachers will still fail to represent God in the most perfect way. And therefore, God expresses mercy in the 10 Commandments. He will bless the sincere efforts in mercy.

So, the first commandment calls us to worship Him only. The second commandment outlines [that] we are to worship Him worthy of His great glory. Let's take these truths to our heart. Let's examine our own worship

of God: privately, family worship. Are they in the spirit of Psalm 2:11? “Serve the LORD with fear, and rejoice with trembling.” Let’s take these truths also to our corporate worship as church families. Are we modeling our church worship services along the biblical principles derived from the second commandment? Is every aspect of the actual worship service, but also of the decorations and the setup of the whole place where we are, honoring the spirit and the details of the second commandment?

And so, as we close, let us do that with remembering that today God is the same, so as He was then. The apostle brings this out in the last verse of Hebrews 12: “God is a consuming fire.” And therefore, he says, “let us seek grace, whereby we may serve him acceptably with reverence and godly fear.” So, may God bless these words, friends, as we have considered the second commandment and will the next time consider the third, that we are not to take the name of the Lord our God in vain. Thank you.

Lecture 10

THE THIRD COMMANDMENT

Often God speaks in His Word about that He does things for His holy Name sake. That means He exalts the glory of His character or Being by His own doings or works. None has as much right to exalt His own Name as God. After all, there is none Who can even be remotely compared to Him. Naturally God is protective of His Name or glory. To associate His Name with something or someone that is evil is very offensive. We would feel the same about our own names. But honoring His Name isn't only pleasing to Him. It also will prove to be a source of blessings for us and those we live with.

TRANSCRIPT LECTURE 10

Welcome, dear friends. As we gather here today, we will study something that is precious to God. That's His holy name. And so, the title is simply, *Honor My Name*. That's God's commandment, in the ten, of the third one, "Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy God in vain. For the LORD will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain" (Exodus 20:7). So, before we consider the details of the third commandment, let's take a third principle that applies to the law of God. And the principle is that the law of God is far more than presents itself at its face value. Officially, [that means] that the commandments of God are spiritual.

There's a depth to [them] that we need to understand if we want to really comprehend the fullness of the commandments of God. Simply, that means that there is far more covered in one commandment than in the few words that you find in the ten. For example, let's take an example of the sixth commandment, "thou shalt not kill." Now, taking it [by] the letter, most of us, hopefully, are not murderers that we have murdered anyone and thereby broken the sixth commandment. Yet, Jesus's teaching on the Sermon of the Mount makes very clear that there is more to the sixth commandment than just the letter: murder. Yeah, we break the sixth commandment, as you will see in a future lecture, much easier or much more [than we think], for example, when we crush someone's spirit, belittle him or her, or use name-calling to injure or wound a person's being. So, each commandment goes much wider and much deeper than the literal reading. Recall the second commandment we just looked at. God does not only forbid us making stone images but also mental pictures.

Each commandment, therefore, includes our understanding, our will, our affections, our intentions, our imaginations. And, that all lies deeper in our heart, our words, our gestures, and finally also our actions. Everything we do or say or intend or are motivated to do, needs to be love-shaped and love-driven at every layer of our human existence. That's what Paul meant when he writes in Romans 7 that the law is spiritual. That's also this depth of the law that Jesus has in mind when He teaches us in Matthew 5 that except our righteousness go deeper than or exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, we shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven.

Now, this depth to each commandment, of course, shouldn't come as a surprise to us. It makes perfect sense in the knowledge that the law is the reflection of God's being, a transcript of His great glory, and that what we have in the 10 Commandments is the shortest exposition of this so great law of the Almighty and of His infinite glory. So, that's then the third principle, that the law is spiritual, much broader than at its face value.

Well, let's now then take up the third commandment. Am I wrong to say that you are jealous, as I am, about my [(your)] name, about me [(yourself)] as a person? Who of us likes the feeling when our name is mentioned in a negative or derogatory way or slandered? We feel offended. We feel pained. We feel humiliated or dishonored when someone does that to our name. Why? Because that name belongs to us. It's me. It's us. It's our identity, even though our name is actually only a word to distinguish me from another human being.

That's at least how most of our names are given us. But, how much more this is true for God. His name is not just given for distinction of other gods than [Himself]. His name is [a] revelation. His name is the very identity of our God and Creator, and therefore, when God reveals Himself in His names, He tells us Who He is. We are to treat that name of God with great respect.

So, in the third commandment God reveals that loving God above all with all your heart and mind and strength is that we use His name with the utmost care, with respect and reverence. So, I propose that we consider the details of the third commandment by looking at four questions. First, why is it so important to use God's name honorably? Second, what is meant with using God's name in vain? And then, thirdly, how do you do that? And fourthly, how do we use the name honorably? So, the positive side of the commandment.

So first, why is it so important to use the name of God honorably? It is because it reflects that you and I recognize Who God is, the first commandment, and what He is like, the second commandment. It is important to grasp [that] the third commandment doesn't stand in isolation [among] all ten, but that the third commandment is an outflow of the first and the second commandment. When I don't recognize Who God is, the first, [and] when I don't reflect God in my worship, the second, it will be revealed [in] how I speak about God or to God, and that's the third. Let me illustrate it.

Let's consider that I see God as some limited being, an indulgent lover, someone without any moral dimension, turning His blind eye to everything that's done wrong, or if I consider Him as an impersonal being, some force, some power, neutral, impersonal, or the opposite spectrum, I stand in awe of Him, and I consider Him like Jeremiah exclaimed, 'Who is like unto thee, Oh LORD. There is none like unto thee; thou art great. Great is thy name' (Jeremiah 10:6). And he extols God in his thinking. Now, how will that reflect that different understanding, different appreciation, different faith in God? How will that influence me in how I speak about Him, how I reference His name? You know, if God is nothing [more] than some kind of a harmless grandfather or some scarecrow in a veggie patch, why [be] concerned about His name? But if, on the other hand, I consider God to be the exalted, the holy, the almighty, the infinite Creator of the heavens and of the earth before Whose presence even sinless angels feel the need to cover themselves, this would be reflected in how I use His name. And, dishonoring the name of the Lord God has far-reaching consequences.

God added in the third commandment that those who would use His name in vain, He will not hold them guiltless. He will punish the dishonor done to His name, and that will already be experienced in this life and also hereafter. So, let's think about that. What kind of punishments will be experienced when we carelessly and consciously misuse His name? Is God only out there to protect His glorious name, or is God also thinking beyond [that to] what's going to happen to you and me when I use His name in vain? Indeed, He's thinking of that as well.

Let's think about what happens to your relationship with your father, mother, spouse, friend, when you speak [dishonorably], when you use his/her name in a dishonorable manner. What happens to the relationship? The relationship degenerates; [there comes] distance, perhaps even more. Behavior becomes bad. Now, if that happens between human and human, it also happens between God and us. And, when I dishonor the name of God in my words and deed, I vex, I offend, I grieve the Lord God. And what happens? He is going to stand back. He is going to withhold Himself. He is going to withdraw. No greater judgment can we experience in this life than when God steps away from us and withholds Himself from us.

If you read through Romans 1, you'll see that written out there, the culture of Paul's days. God gave them up. He lets them go to an increasingly wicked lifestyle, which totally destroyed itself. You see, God is concerned about what happens to us when we do not hold His name in honor. Profaning God's name is followed with a trail

of other sins in the wake. It turns our hearts [to be] calloused about and against God. It leads to a despising of His authority. It erodes the force of the solemn oaths that we swear in courts or promises we make to each other. It turns every prayer [into] an act of mockery and corrupts the entire family around us. As Jeremiah 23:10 says, "Because of swearing the whole land mourneth." So, if we sum it up, dishonoring God's name is the nurse of sin. It's the foster parent of unthankfulness, rebellion, and ungodliness. That's what God is after when He states in the third, 'Don't use my name in vain.'

So then, let's then secondly consider, what is meant exactly with using God's name in vain? The Hebrew word *vain* means frivolous, inconsiderate, irreverent. So, God commands that we express our love to Him in words that reflect that we hold Him very sacred, that we esteem Him, that He is dear to us and glorious in our eyes. So, those of us who sprinkle God's name all over in our daily conversations are not doing justice to the name of God. When we insincerely and superficially and thoughtlessly refer to God, we are breeding contempt, as familiarity can breed contempt. We would generate a casual and a careless and a commonplace attitude to the God Who is a holy being. And I agree with him who said that those who display this casual attitude towards God in the use of His name in a casual way tell us far more than any of the creeds that they adhere to. Now, we know metal by the tinkling sound when we touch it, and we know man by the way they talk about God.

Now, to guard us against such a direction, [we have] not only the third commandment, but think [also] about the Lord's Prayer, as Jesus instructs His disciples in the first petition, "Thy name be hallowed." But even in the address of the prayer, "Our Father, which art in heaven," feel the reverence, the exaltedness that we always have to keep in mind: even when we speak to our Father, He is still in heaven. And, "hallowed be thy name" is [saying], 'teach us so to live that we may do and say everything that will glorify and exalt Thy name.'

So, take a moment to reflect. None of us [would like] it when everybody around us would casually use our name like a stop word in a sentence or like an exclamation to emphasize a point you've made or when you get hurt, an expression of displeasure. We would not like that. Or if you are a parent or a teacher or any other authority figure, and those you lead refer to your name with disrespect as if you're nobody, as if you're nonexistent or [unimportant].

Now, let's therefore consider this commandment and look at how we use the name of God or even shortened forms of the name of God. Are we using it honorably? So, then how do we use His name in vain? There are mainly three ways you do that. First, by referring to or speaking dishonorably about God or even to God. Secondly, by appealing to God in a dishonorable connection. And thirdly, failing to bear His name with honor. Now, let me review those briefly.

First then, we take His name in vain when we refer to Him dishonorably. Now, the most common way is using His name like *God* or *Jesus*, or His attributes like *my goodness*, or His titles, *Oh, my Lord*, in a way that is meaningless, is empty. It has nothing to do with worship. It is just mentioned as a daily part of our speech that doesn't have anything to do with really acknowledging or honoring or worshiping Him. Now, some people are very much in the custom of saying, "Well, God bless you" or "Praise the Lord" or "Amen" without really having a sense of the seriousness and intention but using it as a phrase. So, please let's remember that, that that's not the way that our name is used or we want others to use our name. Let's also not do that to the name of God.

Now, taking His name in vain can also be done in worship time. Addressing God in prayer is a solemn thing. We're speaking to Him before Whom the angels cover themselves with a reverent attention to His glory. If I preach or I teach on His behalf, I better be conscious on Whose behalf I speak. And if I pray to Him, I better be conscious to Whom do I speak. So, flippant, casualness in speech or posture not only shows great ignorance, but it also shows disrespect of Who God is. So, let's keep in mind the thoughtless and the meaningless use of His name in our prayers and in our praises, in which we just repeat His name as a customary phrase or fill up vacancy of thought and we just use His name, or in which we fail to express our reverence and our esteem for God in the way that we pray to Him.

So, thirdly, consider that using God's name or referring to God's being in a casual or a trivial way often becomes the mother of more disrespect and blatant sins. It is often said that flippancy is the cousin to profanity. When I lose the respect, I will forget about other boundaries. And the one sin then leads to the next. Obviously, we take the name of God in vain when we curse. Mentioning God's name when I become angry or hurt myself or get a fright or want to make a strong point all fit in the category of cursing. And sadly, that is so common in our society that we hardly hear this anymore. We need to remind each other that also a sinful silence, when God's

name is taken in vain, is transgressing the third commandment. So, let us remain on guard not too quickly to excuse ourselves as if we didn't hear. For really, that reflects that we love our own name more than the name of our God and Creator.

So, we can take the name of God in vain in the area of swearing false oaths and vows. Now that's what I meant with using the name of God in a dishonorable connection. God doesn't forbid us to make oaths in the Bible. In [a] court setting, truth may be confirmed with a solemn appeal to God's knowledge. We see examples of that. Paul appealed to God in various contexts. So in swearing an oath, we honor God's being as having the power to judge between us and the other and to punish us if we are speaking a falsehood. So when in our court of law we are asked, "Do you swear to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing else but truth?" and if I answer, "Yes, so help me God," that's a valid use of God's name, unless I am, obviously, dishonest or deceitful.

Scripture also records very proper examples of vows that we make in the name of the Lord. Think about Abram's servant how he vowed to Abram regarding the wife for Abraham's son, Isaac. So, a vow is completely proper as we enter into the marriage state. Those are vows we make to God and appeal to Him and to His knowledge in the sincerity of our heart, but we discredit and we dishonor the name of God when we appeal to His knowledge and power, and swear an oath or make a vow, while we are deceitful in our hearts. In civil courts, we call that perjury, and that is a serious sin and a serious dishonor of the name of God.

Now, we take the name of God in vain in blasphemy. That must be obvious. When I reproach or revile God or any of His attributes and say vile or unholy things about Him, that is a horrible sin of dishonor. Scripture records various examples of blasphemy of people against the God of Israel. Think about Pharaoh when he challenged the Lord, "Who is the Lord that I should obey his voice?" Now, it may not sound like blasphemy, but it is very much so. Or Rabshakeh when he says, "Who is the Lord that is able to deliver you out of my hand?" (Isaiah 36:20). That's a direct challenge against the God of heaven in a context that is blasphemous.

But there's one aspect of taking the name of God in vain that has nothing to do with your words. It is interesting that in the Hebrew language the word *take*, which we find [in] the third commandment in English at least, "thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy God in vain," but in the Hebrew this word is always used in the meaning of *to bear, to carry*, not just in the mouth but in a different way, that we carry the name of God. We were named by the name of God. The Israelites are often referred [to] that way: they bore the name of God. And the same of us is true as a New Testament believer. Though it was a nickname, today it is a description: Christian. We carry the name of Christ. We're marked with the name of the Triune God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Repeatedly in the Old Testament, God speaks about Israel as profaning His name when they are doing sinful things. Think of this one. Amos 2:7 refers to a horrible sin against the seventh commandment, and yet it is connected to the third. Listen to this. God rebukes the man and his father who are abusing the same maid sexually, and He adds, "to profane my name." Think of it as a person in the military who carries the name of his country, and he acts [dishonorably]. Even without words, this is an action. He takes the name of his country in dishonor. So, we as a Christian, when we reflect not the holiness and the glory of God in our life, we take the name of God in vain.

That leads us, then, to our last consideration. How do we use the name of God honorably? One of the best answers is found in the Heidelberg Catechism. And though I don't say it every lecture, I encourage you all to go take the Heidelberg Catechism or the Westminster Catechism and to read through those in connection with the commandments. Heidelberg Catechism Question 99 answers, about the third commandment, "that we use the holy name of God no otherwise than with fear and reverence, so that He may be rightly confessed and worshipped by us, and be glorified in all our words and works." Now, the brief version of those words is that in all you do and say, you may reflect the character of God as revealed in His name.

So, when we think about Jesus's expectation in Matthew 5:16, "Let your light so shine that the people may see your works and glorify [your Father]," that's the third commandment then. That reflects the glory of His name in how we live, in what we do. And so, they may see the glory of God the Father. Anyone who bears the name Christian, who as a son or daughter of the Father, acts or speaks in a Godlike manner is honoring the third commandment. When we are reviled, and we revile not back but meekly take it and turn the other cheek, when we genuinely pray for the persecutor, we bear out the name of God and honor Him.

So, exploring the details of these commandments, [they] are kind of like a spiritual x-ray, aren't they? They reveal many aspects of our life in which we fail to devotionally love the Lord our God. And why are we to look so deeply into the law and let the law look so deeply in us? Heidelberg Catechism Question 115 give us a very good answer, which I would like to read. Why look so deeply in the law? "So that all our lifetime we may more and more know our sinful nature, and thus become the more earnest in seeking forgiveness of sin and righteousness in Christ; and likewise, that we constantly endeavor and pray to God for the grace of the Holy Spirit, that we may become more and more conformable to the image of God, till we arrive at the perfection proposed to us in the life to come." Let's therefore pray that as we look at this exposition of every commandment that God's Holy Spirit will not only reveal what it paints but will convict our hearts and sanctify our lives.

And therefore, let's close together by thinking of the words of Jude, which are encouraging. The closing doxology in Jude's epistle [is] encouraging to those of us who feel the stress of how we fail even in this third commandment. Jude writes, "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 Savior, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and forever. Amen." Thank you. May God bless these words.

Lecture 11

THE FOURTH COMMANDMENT

“Lest we forget...” Those words refer to the lives of fallen soldiers but also apply to God’s law. Particularly this applies to the one commandment many omit to honor. It is the command that doesn’t open with “Thou shalt not...” Instead it emphasizes us to “Remember!” The gift of the weekly Sabbath is given for our benefit and blessing. Honoring this day brings multiple blessings. Families and nations will prosper from the weekly rest, refreshment in reflecting on God and His Word. Soul and even our body will prosper when we to remember to use God’s gift of the weekly Sabbath day.

TRANSCRIPT LECTURE 11

Welcome, dear friends. I have the privilege again today to speak to you about another portion of God’s holy law. And this day we will consider God’s weekly gift of the Sabbath Day, based of course on the 10 Commandments, the fourth commandment in Exodus chapter 20 where God says, “Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.” In Deuteronomy 5, Moses recorded it as “Keep the Sabbath day,” or observe the Sabbath day, “to sanctify it, as the LORD thy God commanded thee.” God has a great reason for commanding us this, and I am excited to show you what’s the background and what the intent of the fourth commandment is.

But before we do that, let’s take a look at a fourth principle that applies to all ten of the commandments. And that is that the actual transgressions of God’s holy law are in two categories. The sins of commission are the sins of doing what He forbids, but [there are] also the sins of omission, the sins of not doing what He commands. Now, the sin of commission is when He says, “thou shalt not steal,” and I walk into my neighbor’s house and I steal his money. That would be a committing of a sin, but there’s also the sin of omission. For example, when I have extras, and I face a needy neighbor who is hungry or cold, and I don’t give to him, now I’m also stealing in the reverse of the commandment, “thou shalt give.” That’s a sin of omission. James defines that sin in James 4:17, “Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin.”

Now, it is quite common for us to think more about our sins of commission than the sins of omission. Perhaps it is because the law of God is worded in the “thou shalt not,” commission. But, friends, in reality it’s the sins of omission that outweigh the sins of commission. The times I didn’t love as I should. The times I didn’t speak up for God’s honor but was silent. The time I didn’t share the message of hope with a neighbor. The time I didn’t praise Him when another mercy touched my life. And the list goes on and on. The sins of omission outweigh. And let [then] both commission and omission make us realize how we need the blood of Jesus Christ and His righteousness on a daily basis.

So, having considered that principle, let’s now turn our attention to the weekly gift of the Sabbath day as God has legislated in the fourth commandment. There are two basic principles we need to for a moment look at before we look at the commandment itself. And the first is that the fourth commandment has a permanent character.

As New Testament Christians, we are still obliged to honor the weekly Sabbath day. There [are] a few arguments that we can give for that.

First, the fourth was written with God's finger in the stone tablets of the law just as the other nine, and there's no indication that God meant that fourth to be erased or to be rewritten. Remember the Sabbath day was not a Mosaic institution. "Remember to keep the Sabbath day." It refers to creation day already. The purpose of the Sabbath day is as needed today as it was in the days of Moses. God's purpose for the Sabbath day was to delight Himself in the works of His own creation, and that's why also we need that. Interestingly, in Exodus 31:17 Moses wrote, God "rested, and was refreshed" on the Sabbath day. Now, the word *refreshed* is a unique word. God needed no physical rest, but God refreshed Himself in viewing the works that He had created. That hints, that word *refreshed*, hints clearly at the intention of the weekly Sabbath day. It is given for our refreshment.

So, no New Testament Scripture proves anywhere that this pattern of six days work followed with one day rest has been overturned or changed. What the New Testament doesn't repeal, or doesn't forbid, stands as the Old Testament has worded it, for the Old Testament has as much authority as the New Testament. So in sum, then let's consider that the 10 Commandments remain the base law, the basic constitution of the kingdom of God. Indeed, there are some ceremonial or civil aspects that have changed in the New Testament, but the moral character of the Sabbath day remains the same.

The second principle, that of course we could spend much more time on and would require a separate lecture to support, is that the Sabbath day in the New Testament has become the first day of the week instead of the seventh. There's only one support I share for that at this moment. If you compare Exodus 20 with Deuteronomy 5, you notice that the reference point of the Sabbath day observation has changed. In Exodus 20, Moses, or God Himself rather, referenced it to the creation. Moses, however, referenced it to the exodus from the land of Egypt. The redemption of the Israelites became for them the observation point where the Sabbath day was linked into.

Now, that is in the New Testament an even greater reason when we have the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ on the first day of the week. And ever since, the early Christians observed the first day of the week as their reference point for the Sabbath day. And this changed from the seventh day to the first day. It also fits beautifully in the story of redemption in the unfolding of the beauty of the gospel message. In the Old Testament when we stand before Christ and His work, it's like the Old Testament church is looking forward to the rest, working six days to come to the rest. But now in the New Testament, the gospel is [full] and clear: we begin with the rest on the first day, and out of that we face our task and do the work that God is calling us to do. So, the Christian Sabbath day is anchored in Christ's merits; and resting upon His finished work, we go forth in our work week. That change, of course, of day didn't affect the moral character of the Sabbath day.

And so, let's now consider then what exactly does God mean when He commands us to keep the Sabbath day holy? There [are] two main questions that I propose we will consider. First, why did God legislate this fourth commandment? And secondly, what is meant with keeping or observing the Lord's day as a holy day? So first, why did God legislate this fourth commandment? He did this to protect His very special gift to us. One day in a seven day cycle God gives us as a free day from the daily labor, a day in which we may be refreshed [and] renewed, a day in which we may be recalibrated in our relationship to Him, with God, in the worship of Him so that we may be more ready to go forth in the work days of the six days coming. And you'll notice, as you look around in the history of the world, that every culture and every age that has honored the weekly Sabbath day, according to the biblical principles, has experienced, especially in that commandment, the great reward that God gives upon honoring the fourth.

It's clear that it promotes physical health. It promotes our emotional well-being to step away from the rush and the stress and the strain of the daily work. It's obvious that this refreshes and restores the spiritual life, and we may focus our mind on the heavenly, the spiritual, as the Word and the Spirit [work] together to restrengthen again in our heart what spiritually can often suffer in the week. It strengthens the bond of fellowship when we come together with fellow Christians, and for some of us [these are] the only Christians we might meet the whole week as we work out in the secular world. It also even benefits our farm animals, if we have some, or even our visitors or our travelers who happen to come by. In the days of the Bible times, of course, when the whole society shut down, yes, even travelers [would] have to shut down their business and participate. And it was an evangelical purpose as well, to show to the nations the beauty of the weekly Sabbath day.

God knows, friends, that every relationship needs quality time. If a relationship is to grow deeper, it needs quality time. It needs to have a focus upon each other. Six days of the week most of us are busy. We carry out God's work in our daily task, whatever that may be. It takes lots of energy, sometimes [with] little time left to enjoy or to focus our mind upon our Creator. And therefore, the Lord as our divine Employer says, 'Look, six days you must do your work; the Sabbath day, I release you from your daily labor to give you a Sabbath day, a day set aside for you. No, for Me and you.' That's not an idle day. Let's not make that conclusion. It's not a sleep day. It's not a day to go do your favorite hobby or consume the entire day in parties and sightseeing. No, it's a day in which we are given the time to rest, to refresh, to refocus. It's an opportunity to hear His Word, to worship Him in corporate fellowship [and] in acts of mercy. It all allows us time away from what is normally taking [our time] to spend time with God. "The LORD thy God," the commandment says.

So when we pull in, then, the words of Jesus in Mark 2:27-28, let's not draw the wrong conclusion of that statement, as so often seems to be done. Jesus says there, to the Scribes and Pharisees, "The sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath: Therefore the Son of man is Lord also of the sabbath." Now, if you study the context of this Scripture, you notice that Jesus is again being confronted by the Scribes and Pharisees for breaking the Sabbath Day, and all He's doing is doing good. And so, in that context, Jesus unpacks the Sabbath Day from all the rules and regulations that hinder the beauty of the day. And, the day has become for many of these Jewish people almost unbearable by all the rules that they have to keep. And so, that was His intention, to again redeem the Sabbath Day, to bring out its real intention.

So then, what is the real intention? What is meant with keeping, and observing, the Lord's Day holy? The word *holy* means to be separated, means to be set aside, to keep it special. The Sabbath Day stands apart from all the other six days in the week in which we do our daily and our regular and ordinary duties of life, and they differ for all of us. Some of you go to school, study hard all week. Some of us are family, busy with that. Others are working in factories, or we are in the medical field. We're earning money for our families to be maintained. Now, one of those [days] every six days, the day [was] set apart from these ordinary labors.

Now, this pattern of six work, one rest, is set by God's own pattern in the creation week. That's why the fourth undoubtedly begins with "remember." What has been the pattern ever since the creation of the world, that pattern is to continue. God ceases from His ordinary labor. So are we [to cease]. God continues His work of providence, so we may continue to provide for families the meals, may provide for taking care of the kids [or] when somebody needs help [or] is wounded. We need to take care of the safety and security in the hostile world we live. Those are the necessary works. Those obviously may and must continue. So, think about the many Christians today that through the political circumstances in which they are, or maybe economic pressures, are not even having the opportunity or the liberty to take one out of the seven days to keep it separate. That was obviously also the experience of the Jews in the time of the Egyptian slavery.

So, let us then look at four ways in which we are to keep the Sabbath Day holy so that it reflects the intention of the fourth. The first one is that we decisively stay away from making the Sunday into a Fun Day. In my area, many of the Christian churches have church services on Saturday night and on Monday night. And upon inquiry for that, the answer simply was, "Well, that allows our people to use the Sunday for their games and for their fishing and for their outings. And so, they can go visit their friends. They don't have the inconvenience of attending church. That's why we do it on another evening." You see what's behind this? We reschedule God to a place in our week that fits our schedule better. That's self-will worship. That is not the intention of God's fourth commandment. I remind you of the words of God in Isaiah 58, where God speaks about the Sabbath Day keeping. And it's worth it to listen for a moment to the exact words that He speaks there. "If thou turn away thy foot from the sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on my holy day; and thou shalt call the sabbath a delight, [the] holy of the LORD, honorable; and thou shalt honor Him, not doing thy [own ways], [nor finding thine own] pleasure, nor speaking thy own words: then shalt thou delight thyself in the LORD; and I," there's the promise, "I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth, and I will feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father: for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken it." Do you notice in this verse how God shows the great reward of keeping the Sabbath Day? That's what was His intention. It wasn't to take away from us that He made the fourth commandment. It was to give to us that He set boundaries around each Sabbath Day.

So secondly then, that means that keeping the Sabbath Day holy is that we stop our ordinary labors. “Six days thou shalt labor, and do all thy work: but the seventh is the sabbath of the LORD thy God.” The fourth commandment also includes God’s will that we work six days a week, that we provide for our families in the lawful calling of life six days of the week, but each seventh is a day of rest for everyone. That means not only our children. It also means those who work for us, if we have servants, employees, even visitors that day. And of course, as I said already, that’s not just a day for sleeping and for [lazing] around. It’s a day to use differently than the other six days of the week. It’s not just a free day to do the things that we didn’t have time for in the other six days because we [were] so busy with work. The command to cease from our labor is to free up our time to give closer attention to God, to ponder His Word, to look at His work, also those of nature.

Therefore, let’s not fill up this day with all kinds of activities that take away our focus again away from God for which this day was truly given. That’s like a couple that goes on a date. [They] set aside a day to spend time together. And yet, instead of spending time together, they’re both on their phones, or they’re both doing different things. That’s not a day in which the relationship is deepened and built. Now of course, some will need to work on the Lord’s Day. I’m an example of that. It’s one of my busiest days of the week! And indeed, in ministry or in medical work or others in security forces and so on, they obviously will work on the Lord’s Day. But, what is for them then still important? That they have a Sabbath Day also, after their six days of work. In my case, that becomes usually the Monday. Now, that is my Sabbath Day, and so others need to remember even if they are required to work on the Lord’s Day for necessary reasons, that they are to keep the Sabbath Day.

Now thirdly, keeping the Sabbath Day holy is that we are to direct our focus and our attention upon our Creator, or your Redeemer, or spiritually your husband, your Father, the Lord Jesus. This is the day, friends, that God has given for our spiritual benefit. I cannot improve the words which I will now quote from an author who said, “On this day, as we give our attention to the majestic Word of God, we spend time in prayer and meditation privately, and we share the fellowship with fellow saints in corporate worship of hearing, praying, singing, using the sacraments, that through His Word and Spirit, our souls are cleansed from sin, what we’ve all been defiled with this week, when our affections again are drawn up to the God we are to worship. That the stock of our grace is improved and ennobled when the corruptions of our heart are subdued again and the bonds of fellowship are strengthened.” That was the gift of the Sabbath Day, the real intention.

In this day, think of it as the shepherd calls us back together from out of all of our tasks in life, and says, “Come here and rest a while. Come here in the sheepfold. Hear what I have to say.” We’re nourished. We [lie] down in the green pastures. We drink from the still waters. And then, the next day, we go back into the Valley of the Shadow of Death. We’re going to face the challenges, the temptations, the tasks that we have. And there’s something drastically wrong if we have the attitude of ‘Well, let’s get this commitment to spend time with God over as [quickly] as possible, so we can do our own things.’ If that is our attitude and that’s how we look at the Lord’s Day observance, then that’s a spiritual chore instead of a delight.

Let this day also then be a day in which you, as family heads, structure the day for your children to be a spiritually profitable day. Set time aside to instruct your children, parents. This is the day for that. [There’s] no school, no other things. This is the time that you spend as families building up the relationships, deepening the understanding of the Word of God. That requires steadfastness and proactive thinking as we raise our families.

Now lastly, fourthly, this day is a day in which we can be involved in the works of charity. Our Lord Jesus gave that example that He did many great acts of mercy on the Sabbath Day. Though it stirred the anger of His leaders, of the religious leaders, He was only doing the Lord’s work. And so, we are there, by the example, also given the instruction to use the Sabbath Day in works of mercy that otherwise perhaps we don’t have time for in the week. So, let’s train our thinking into the direction to use some of our extra time to minister to our needy neighbors, no, not to go and mow their lawn and do their shopping and clean up their houses. That’s not a necessary work. But no, [we are to minister to] the spiritual, the emotional, the social [needs]. Some of them are lonely. Some of them are needy. Some of them also are hungry. And James points out that that’s a sin when we see a brother and a sister who [are] hungry, and we say at the end of the service, ‘Well, have a nice week and be warm, or be fed,’ and we do not take him in and feed him and nourish him.

So, having considered these main principles of God’s fourth commandment, I have not answered every question that comes up. Can we do this? Can we do that? There is no end to that. These very case applications,

friends, are some of the things you and I need to make ourselves. And what is the best way to do that? [It] is [to] use a framework of a few questions, to look at these various questions of what not and what yes, through the framework of questions. I have four questions I often ask myself when I deal with Sabbath Day keeping. The first one is, 'Will this activity dispose me or distract me from the delight in the spiritual worship of God? What will it do to my mind or the minds of my children?' Secondly, 'Will this activity help my family but also my neighbors, maybe even my unchurched neighbors, to take the Lord's Day seriously?' And thirdly, 'Is what I do simply to indulge myself physically or mentally or socially? What is now the main purpose of it? Is it really to refocus my thoughts on God, or is it just selfish? And is what I do or what I allow [aligned] to keep the character of the Sabbath Day special?'

Now, when you look at those four, then really there is no question whether you should prioritize going to the Sunday worship services to hear the Word expounded and to understand what God is saying to us, and preferably, twice a day. You probably experienced the first service as the cleansing service, as we come out of this secular setting, often, and we're again confronted with the Word of God. The second service is often far more profitable as we then are nourished and deepened in our understanding of the will and the being of God. Take some extra personal time on the Lord's Day for prayer and reading. That ought to be nonnegotiable.

And so, let's conclude with saying this: To neglect the Lord's Day brings huge spiritual damage to the quality of our personal, family, [and] church life, in general. When we are not face to face with God in His majesty, when we are not listening and drinking in the truths of God's Word, when we are not nourished and prioritizing our relationship with God above all others, it will affect our life. [As a] matter of fact, the gateway to the slippery slope of declension and of an apostasy is to do away with the fourth commandment. In my pastoral ministry, I see when people are beginning to compromise the fourth commandment and the Lord's Day, you see them gradually slipping away, if not them, certainly their children and their grandchildren. So, friends, the fourth commandment begins with "Remember, observe, keep." God knows how sacred this day is. A little children's song puts it in perspective. "The Lord's Day well spent brings a week of content and strength for the toils of tomorrow, but the Lord's Day profaned, whatever is gained, is a certain forerunner of sorrow."

Well, that completes the first table of the law. We hope to take up the second table of God's 10 Commandments, and they are just as beautiful and valuable as again they reflect God's devotional love for our wellbeing. Thank you very much. May God bless us.

Lecture 12

THE FIFTH COMMANDMENT

God gave us power when He designed the earth to be ruled through His representatives. These authority structures God established are for our good. They are intended to keep our living space orderly and thereby happy. Since our fall power has become dangerous. Possessing it often leads to abusing it. Facing it often tempts us to resist it. Though none likes the abuse of power, we all are tempted to abuse it once we have it. Therefore the 5th commandment to honor those in authority as well as to use authority honorably is the key to prolonging a harmonious and satisfying life.

TRANSCRIPT LECTURE 12

Hello, friends. Today, we will consider together the fifth commandment. I have called the title of this subject *Honor God's Authority*. The fifth commandment is "Honor thy father and mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee" (Exodus 20:12), a crucial, important commandment. But, before we look at the fifth, let me share with you a fifth principle relating to the law of God. And, the principle states that we are not only bound to fulfill the law by ourselves, [but] we're also bound by the law of love to help others to obey the law as far as we are able to do so. And, there are various Scriptures that support that.

Let's first look even at the 10 Commandments [themselves]. In the fourth commandment, if I am the head of the home I am responsible that everyone in my home also honors the fourth commandment. Be it visitors, be it family members or workers or animals, they all are to rest. Another example would be Leviticus 19:17. God says, "Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thine heart: thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy neighbor, nor suffer sin upon him." I need to do everything that he will turn away from the sin he, or she, is doing. In Matthew 7:12, Jesus sets out the duty in a very positive manner. Listen to His summary: "Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do you even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets."

Now, if you are running into a danger zone, and you don't see it, what would you like others to do but to help you to see the danger and stop you and turn you around. See, that's your duty too. That's my duty as I fulfill the law of love. The law of love extends itself beyond my own responsibilities. Whether our efforts will be rewarded or blessed, that's not our responsibility. Ours is the duty to love our neighbor as ourselves in seeking to prevent them from sinning. And again, friends, as we look at the whole of the background of the law of God, we can see the revelation of God's own devotional love to seek to let us live lives conformable to His holy law. And, that makes then perfect sense that we are to reflect that same attitude, effort, [and] intention as He is doing.

So, let's now consider the fifth commandment: Honor thy father and thy mother. This is the first of the second table. So, we ask ourselves, what is the reason that God started the second table with this fifth commandment of honor your father and mother? And second, what is the incentive that the Lord adds to this commandment?

That you may live long. It appears to say that. And thirdly, what are the details of the commandment? How do I honor? What is that?

So first, let's consider, what is the reason that God opens the second table of the law with the fifth commandment? There's the traditional view, at least, and I hold to that view as well that this is the first commandment of the second table, and that explains Ephesians 6 where Paul says that the fifth commandment is the first commandment with a promise. Now, that's only true if Paul is referring to it as the first commandment of the second table because there was a promise in the second commandment already.

However, some of Paul's Jewish colleagues didn't think that the fifth commandment was the first of the second table. They saw it as the fifth, the last one, of the first table. And that's an interesting view, which bears some truth to it because their reasoning was that in honoring all legal authority we honor God Who is delegating His authority to particular persons in authority. That would be fathers and mothers in the domestic realm. That would be rulers and teachers in the church realm. That would be governors and kings and so on in the civil realm. However, I hold to the traditional view that we can consider the fifth commandment as the first of the second table. But then, why did God start the second table with the fifth?

Because, that's the first reason, because God seeks to promote and protect our happiness as we live together as a group of people on His planet Earth. Nothing is more foundational and protective for the joy and happiness of our life here [than] that we abide in the authority structure that governs and is to govern our life here on earth. That's His design. God has designed an authority structure. From the very beginning of creation, He gave Adam dominion over the earth. He made Adam the head of his wife in the marriage. And God knows where, let's take family life [for an example], where the authority structure in family life is established and respected, where love and respect is given in the family authority structure, where clear boundaries of authority are established and maintained, there is the greatest happiness. Family [is] where not only the subjects *honor those in authority*, but [it is] also where those in authority reflect the One Who has delegated them with authority.

So, you see that the fifth commandment is a vital commandment when it comes to the happiness of our life together as human beings in a society. In God's book, the family unit ranks clearly as the highest or the most important of the group settings within our earthly existence. We know that family life is foundational to all other aspects of our social life. Family is the seminary of the church. Family is the training ground for future marriages. Family is the real preparatory place where we are nurtured for our position in society. Now, we've extended the school to that, not to replace the family but to expand the abilities of the family.

God knows that nothing so deeply influences our life as what we receive in our youth. Think of this verse, Proverbs 22:6, "Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it." God knows when children learn, trained in the early stages of life, how to honor authority, they will become honorable leaders themselves once they have grown up into adults. They will become respectable citizens, when they've learned to respect in the early stages of life, when children see the example of honorable leadership in their parents. And as they mature, they will, as it were, turn into arrows to fight the battle of the kingdom in the society in which they live or in their future marriages when they are in turn becoming parents.

So, let me conclude with one obvious statement that is good for us to be repeating in the days in which we live. What God has designed cannot and need not be improved. What do I mean? God defines in the fifth commandment family as a father and a mother and children. But what's obvious today [is that] many cultures face a troubling trend of redefining God's design. Children are to be nourished by a father, a male, and a mother, a female, instead of two of the same-sex parents. The fifth commandment establishes the basic foundation of the family and defines it as a father and a mother. That also means, of course, that children are to be generated within the marriage relationship. Therefore, single parenting is not God's design and ought not to be our choice on purpose, though sadly, that seems to happen a lot also in our days.

Now, let's now together consider what is the incentive that God gives us in the fifth commandment? "Honor thy father and mother: that thy days may be long in the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee." At first face value, this promise seems to suggest a long life to everyone that honors their parents. I'm sure we can all think of examples where that reality contradicts what we apparently read in the fifth commandment. As a pastor, I have buried very obedient children at a young age, and I see very disobedient children becoming very old. What does that mean?

These facts mean one of three things. One, God fails to fulfill His promise. Well, we can eliminate that. God is truth, and what He has spoken, He fulfills. The second [is] that God speaks in general terms. This is usually what happens, though of course in His sovereignty, there are exceptions. There's truth to that, but thirdly, is that God isn't speaking about individuals in the fifth commandment, but He is speaking about families and churches and societies. They will prosper with long, good existence of living when they honor authority structure as God has given it. And, I believe that is the intent of the incentive in the fifth commandment as you can see when you compare the Scriptures around this commandment in Deuteronomy. God promises that where this commandment is kept, both by those in authority and by those under authority, we will together experience, as families and as the larger society, the best and the longest quality of life together.

Listen to how Moses rewords the fifth commandment in Deuteronomy 5. He says, "that your days may be prolonged, and that it may go well with thee, in the land which the LORD thy God giveth [thee]." And, if you look at the word *prolonged* in the Deuteronomy book, you find it is regularly used in reference to all other kinds of commandments. The point is [that] God says obedience will prolong life, will prolong security, unity, stability, harmony. So therefore, God promises when we honor authority structures as He has designed them, we will prolong a good quality of life in family and nation, and that may include also a longer life. Proverbs 14:34 states that "righteousness exalts the nation." And, that is not only true for nations. That is also true for families. That is also true for churches. Children that are taught to honor God by honoring their parents, by loving their siblings, by obeying God's precepts while young, these children grow up by the grace of God as responsible citizens, fighting for the causes of righteousness that exalts and ennobles all those who are in connection with them.

So then, let's look at the details of the fifth. Again, the fifth is much broader than I can cover in this little time period we have. Generally, we focus on the children in the fifth commandment. They are to obey, honor, their parents, but, friends, there are many layers of truth in the fifth commandment that need our attention. I can only highlight them by listing them.

First of all, it contains God's will that all who bear authority, parents, I'll see in a moment others, are doing that in reflection of how God carries out His authority. That's the first layer of the commandment. There is therefore instruction in the fifth commandment for parents, for husbands, who have authority over their spouse, their wife, church leaders, teachers, employers, government leaders, military leaders, political leaders. All of those have instruction in the fifth commandment [on] how to exercise their authority.

On the reverse side, it also contains instruction about how those under authority are to behave towards [those] in authority, and though the fifth commandment mentions children, there [are] many more that are included in the fifth commandment. Yes, it applies to the wife in marriage, to the children to their parents, the church members to their church leaders, children in school settings, citizens to their national leaders, employees or workers to their employers, soldiers to their ranking leaders above them. All of them are also addressed in the fifth commandment. Imagine what society would be like when everyone, both in leadership and under authority, would honor the fifth commandment in a godly manner. What a devotional loving and leading will there be seen by those in authority, and what an obedience and honor and respect will be given by those under authority. Can you see how that would generate a life that's prolonging in beauty and harmony, in health and well-being if that would be honored. Now, that's the intent of the fifth commandment.

So, I'll limit myself only now to two general observations. What is God's will for us toward those who are in authority over us, and what is God's will for us who have been given authority over others? Those are two general observations. So first, what are the three aspects of God's will in honoring those in authority?

First, that I recognize that God is pleased to rule me, or us, by the hand of delegated authority figures. Whether my parents, or whether my husband, or whether my president or my boss, each of these persons who is in an authority position over me [is] God's office-bearer. In my tradition, the word *office-bearers* is only used for elders, deacons, and ministers, but biblically, anyone in authority, no matter what layer, is God's office-bearer. They exercise authority. On whose behalf? On God's behalf. He is the ultimate lawgiver, the ultimate authority, in heaven and earth. And one day, each of these authority figures has to give an account to Him Whom they represent. I'll give you one example. When Paul is writing to the Romans about their governors, and these Romans are experiencing at this moment that there's some anti-Christian pressure placed by the governors upon the

believers, yet he writes, “show them honor, respect” Romans 13. “Honor the king” (I Peter 2:17), Peter wrote, likewise, even though the king was not serving the Lord.

So, that’s the first we need to recognize. God is pleased to rule then, as by their hands, my life. They are His office-bearers. Secondly, we are to honor them, honor God’s representatives or office-bearers in whatever position we meet them. To honor, that means to show respect, recognize the dignity of the office of the person. And notice what I said, “recognize the dignity of the office.” As a parent, as a father or a mother, or as a leader in a church, we are to respect the office because the word *honor* does not reflect to the person. I’m not to honor a person. That’s idolatry. I am to honor the office that a person has been given temporarily by God, as His delegate. Take David, for example. He did not esteem the person Saul when he was trying to kill him, but his heart smote him. His conscience bothered him when he did something dishonorable to Saul. Why? Because, he had touched the Lord’s anointed. He had done dishonorable action towards the Lord’s office-bearer.

So, we honor God’s office-bearers, be that your parents, be that your husband, your nation’s leaders, your church leaders, when we obey their instruction without question, when we accept their leadership without a challenge, when we heed their instruction or their guidance or their wisdom. We honor them when we show faithfulness and love towards them by helping them or encouraging them or comforting them or sharing our appreciation, making their task easier to carry out. All those are ways of honoring them. And, notice the fifth commandment doesn’t use the word *love*. Are we not to love them? Of course we are, but we are to express that love in respect to their office that God gave them.

However, there’s one exception. [In] Acts 5:29 Peter stated, “We ought to obey God rather than men.” Never does anyone of us need to obey an authority figure who tells us to do something that is contrary to God’s revealed will. That applies to a child, a wife, a worker, a church member, and so on. And, each parent who is listening ought to think about this as you train your children. We are to teach our children that they are to always obey God rather than man. In my work as pastor, I deal a lot with abuse. And often, abuse happens because we haven’t trained our children to obey God rather than man. When we train our children that authority figures may not abuse their position of power and make children do, or involve children or anyone other under their authority, in sin. So, parents teach your children how to properly and respectfully appeal or disobey if it appears that they’re asked to do something that’s sinful.

Now, the third requirement with respect to those who are to honor them in authority is that we are to remember our office-bearers are human and are sinful. So, let us bear with their limits, weakness, and infirmities. None is perfect, also not those who are called to lead or to carry out God’s task of governing over the earth on His behalf. Sometimes those in authority may lack the correct understanding. They may not have as many abilities as you do. They may have some unpleasant characteristics. They may not be as successful in life as you are. They may not have the wisdom, perhaps that you may feel you have. And since they’re also sinners, from time to time, they fail. They may overestimate your ability in what they require, or there may be unholy anger flaring up in their action, or they may make an incorrect assessment or have an unfair judgment.

We are to honor them. It’s God’s will [that] we honor them in authority over us, and as the catechism again writes so beautifully, the Heidelberg Catechism, that we “patiently bear with their weaknesses and infirmities, since it pleases God to govern us by their hand.” And, friends, what a beautiful example do we have in the Lord Jesus Christ, the sinless Son of Joseph and Mary. We read in Luke that He went down with them when He came to Nazareth, and He was subject unto them until he was 30 years old, and always respectfully honored His sinful father and mother, though He Himself was sinless.

Then, lastly, let’s look at what is God’s will for us who have been given authority, the other side of the fifth commandment. Now, God’s will is that in all my actions and all my reactions as an authority figure, I reflect Him in my authority exercised. God is pleased to govern a little portion of life on earth through my hand. It’s His earth. It’s His people. It’s His possessions, and He’s given me the stewardship, in my case as a father, over people; and I am in duty-bound to study what is God’s office bearing like? or what is God’s authority like? and how am I to reflect that?

So, as a husband, we’re duty-bound to study how Jesus is a husband to His spiritual wife, and so are we to reflect His headship in our marriage. As parents, we are to study how God parents mankind in general, and how the father parents his children. As a governor or as a king, we’re duty-bound to study how God is King over all

the nations and reflect His ruling in our ruling. And again, as church leaders, we are duty-bound to feed the flock in the spirit and in the manner of the great Shepherd, Who came not to be served, not for His own status, but He came to serve and to give Himself in the ministry of love. So again, as parents we have much in the fifth commandment, or as any other office-bearer position, to study what am I, how am I to be honorable in my position as leader?

Now, let me conclude, therefore, with pointing that God clearly warns parents, and am I wrong when I extend that to all those who are in authority, in Ephesians 6:4 and Colossians 3. God pointedly warns fathers not to abuse their positional power. And why? Because we would create rebellion or anger or discouragement within those who we are leading. In the opposite spectrum, Proverbs 29:15 also warns parents, and anyone in authority, not to neglect the use of discipline, and thereby spoil the child. “The rod and reproof give wisdom: but a child left to himself bringeth his mother and his father to shame,” and is that not true on every layer of authority.

So, as I close this lecture, friends, I hope you feel with me that I have barely touched the tip of an iceberg here. It is well said, “The hand that rocks the cradle, rocks the world.” Now, that may be a little overstated, but there’s a lot of truth in that statement. Our task as leaders is crucial for the next generation of leaders. If we fail to teach the present generation respect and honor of authority, and if we fail to be honorable authority, then indeed, we are sowing the seeds of anarchy and tyranny. How beautiful is the opposite when children learn to honor godly parents, when wives learn to respect loving husbands, sacrificial husbands, when citizens honor their serving leaders, when church members esteemed their leaders highly for their work’s sake. Then we will experience the beauty of holiness.

As Father, Son, and Holy Spirit relate in this beautiful harmony in Their divine existence, so also will we experience this beautiful harmony, unity, and beauty as we live together as humanity on this His earth. You can see again how David comes to say, “O how love I thy law! It is my meditation day and night” (Psalm 119:97). Thank you, and may God bless these instructions.

Lecture 13

THE SIXTH COMMANDMENT

Generally all people value their life. It is because we were created to live forever and ever. Life was once so beautiful that it was the greatest joy to live. There were no threats, there was no aging, there were no sicknesses. Sadly, that all changed when sin entered into the world and by sin death. Still, despite that sad reality, we still will fight to protect or defend our life because it is precious. Life is also precious to God our Creator. He made that very clear in placing a firm fence around every person's life. The fence reads "Thus says the LORD GOD, Thou shalt not murder."

TRANSCRIPT LECTURE 13

Welcome, dear friends, as we together today consider the sixth commandment. It is a short one. In the Hebrew, it is literally "Do not murder. Thou shalt not kill." And in this very short commandment, however, is a tremendous depth and detail as each of the commandments does [have]. Before we consider the details of the sixth commandment, let me share with you a sixth principle that applies to [the] law of God. And this one I somewhat touched upon in my previous lecture on the fifth commandment, but let's flesh it out little bit more.

Acts 5:29 states, "We ought to obey God rather than men." These words are Peter's answer to the spiritual authorities in Jerusalem that are forbidding him and the other apostles to teach in the name of Jesus. Now, that's a situation in which the authorities are overstepping the boundaries of their authority. And when they command us something that is contrary to God's Word and God's expressed will, we have the obligation to disobey them rather than obey because we have to obey God above man.

Recall again the first table versus the second table. The first table was greater, not the greatest but greater, than the second table. In a time of conflict, God first calls us to honor the obligations to the first table. Now this is an important principle, and particularly important to those of us who are teaching young children growing up to adulthood. This needs to be taught, this principle. Not only honor your father and mother, but also [that] we are to obey God rather than man is especially important to protect children from the horrors of sexual abuse.

There are of course many other instances in our society where this principle comes to action. Not only can a child refuse the demands or comments of a father or other authority figure in a sexual way, but also a nurse and a doctor could disobey a hospital order to abort children. Soldiers are legitimate to disobey their commander when he commands them to massacre innocent and harmless and defenseless people. So, may God prevent us from being in such situations, and may the Lord help those who do face these situations.

Now, let's listen together to God's will as stated in the sixth commandment: thou shalt not kill, or do not murder. Let's consider this in two questions. First, let's look [at] Who gave this commandment, and why did God give us this commandment? And then secondly, let us consider what God forbids and commands. What are the various layers of this sixth commandment? So, Who gave it? Who stated, Thou shalt not murder anyone?

The Creator of life. We know that God gave the 10 commandments, but think of Him as the Creator of life. He decides over the boundaries of life and death. He is the sovereign Creator. He has the ultimate authority over all these issues of life and death. And, this is a fundamental truth to grasp if we look [at] and understand the sixth commandment.

You and I are not a product of a chance event. We're not just a biological event, evolved as humans. We have no right over our own life or over the life of any other human being. We are all individually created by the Creator of life, Who has the ultimate authority over our life and the life of anyone around us. You see, once this belief in the ultimate Creator is lost, you notice what happens to the value of life. It becomes valueless. It becomes cheap. It becomes disposable when it inconveniences or it hinders me to reach my goal or live my life.

Not only did God create us, and therefore is the Possessor of our life, [but] God also created us with a distinction. He made us in His image and in His likeness. And this truth that we are a reflection of Him gives every individual human being, no matter how little, no matter how old, unique dignity and value. It gives human life a sacred character. And therefore, God considers an assault on any human being as an assault on Himself. Long before God issued the 10 Commandments on Mount Sinai, He spoke to Noah about the sacredness of human life. Let me read it to you as God speaks in Genesis 9:6, "Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed", and why? "for in the image of God made He man." We'll come back to this commandment, but this shows you the dignity and sacredness of human life.

So now stepping away from this, the question, 'Why did God give us the sixth commandment?' is not so difficult to answer. Not only does God value life, He also knows that you and I value it. He knows that our spouse, our children, our family, and friends value it. We all have seen and witnessed [from] time to time the tears, the desolation, the brokenness of those who experience violent crimes taking their loved ones in acts of evil. And therefore, God states clearly, "Don't murder anyone or yourself." Life, friends, is a fenced off area. Here we have no authority, except the Creator grants it, and we'll see that He has done that in a few instances. The "why" of this commandment is even clearer when we look at the reverse side of "Thou shall not murder anyone." That means you shall do everything to promote, to maintain, to nurture the life of our neighbor so that it may flourish.

So then, let's look at the details of the sixth commandment. What does God forbid? What does He command? Clearly, "thou shall not murder." God forbids and condemns the deliberate and the unlawful taking of the life of anyone. God does not forbid all killing in the sixth commandment, but He forbids all murder. Murder already happened in Genesis 4 when Cain murders his brother. From there we see the murder rate increasing, and before the flood it must have had gigantic proportions since the earth was filled with violence, no respect [for] human life.

Now understanding that God's will is that we are not to murder anyone, that makes aborting the unborn children murder. The beginning and the existence of human life from the moment of conception to the moment we die is not [a] scientific matter. It is a moral matter. God, as the Creator, has fenced off this area as His prerogative. It involves life that doesn't belong to us. It belongs to the Creator. And therefore, those who speak about the so-called rights of the mother, [are] forgetting about the rights of the Creator, as well [as] the rights of the child. So, none of us [has] permission to murder children inside or outside the womb.

Proverbs 24:11-12 is a beautiful example of an application of the sixth commandment with regard to the unborn children. "If," it reads, "thou forbear to deliver them that are drawn unto death, and those that are ready to be slain; if thou sayest behold we knew it not; does not he that pondereth the heart consider it? and he that keepeth thy soul, does he not know it? and shall not he render to every man according to his works?" I realize, perhaps, that one of you is listening here who [has] gone through the personal guilt of an aborted child, and such I may assure that there is forgiveness also with God for such an action. In Hebrews we read that the blood of Jesus speaketh of better things than the blood of murdered Abel (Hebrews 12:24). The blood of Jesus speaks about forgiveness, about hope, about restoration. Therefore, take the sin also of abortion to the God of mercy.

Now understanding the sixth, "thou shalt not murder," also has application to the end of life when dealing with the sin of euthanasia. That's also an overstepping of the authority of God over the end point of our life. No matter how practical, no matter how humanitarian our arguments sound to defend the ending of human life, God's Word is clear, "Thou shalt not murder or kill." That also includes assisting someone to kill him or herself.

God says in I Samuel 2:6, “The LORD killeth, and maketh alive: he bringeth down to the grave, and bringeth up.” To him belong the issues of life and death (Psalm 68:20).

Now this position does not deny that there is [a] need to help those who are suffering greatly, that there is need to help those who are going through the exhausting trial of agonizing pain, or the need of surrounding those whose life has become unproductive and therefore are a huge burden on family and friends. We all know that sin has brought on our life and our older ones the infirmities, realities, that are hard or impossible to bear. But in forbidding euthanasia, God is telling us His is the determination between life and death.

Now understanding the sixth, “thou shalt not murder,” also tells us that humans are not to take their own [lives]. Suicide is an act of rejection of the Creator’s sovereignty over our life, and those who do this consciously and willfully, do this in an act of defiance against the Creator. Friends, suicide is never the answer for those whose lives are broken, in pain or lonely, or facing crime. The answer for such problems always is the same: The Lord Jesus Christ, His Word, and His mercy. Seek those who will minister to you and help you to deal with these realities that urge you to take your life, to make an end. Suicide is a tender subject. Undoubtedly, there are many who take their lives in deep mental depression and darkness. And therefore, friends, we need to leave the eternal destiny of those also in the hands of the Creator. He knows those who are His.

Now, a milder form of a transgression of the sixth commandment, “thou shall not murder,” has to do with the neglect of my body and my health. Usually, we focus too little on that, or some of us too much, but most of us too little, on the care of our body, the temple of our soul and the temple of the Holy Ghost. Giving priority to our soul is clear, but nor does Scripture teach us that giving priority to our soul or to the kingdom of God means that I can neglect my body, just as giving priority to God doesn’t excuse me from neglecting my wife, my husband, my children, or my task in life. Our bodies are a wonderful part of God’s creation. Now, we have the responsibility to do all to protect it, to maintain it, to nurture it, so that it can do the task that God calls us to do in the best way.

So, consider [that] unhealthy eating [and] excessive drinking, are transgressions of the sixth commandment. Smoking or using drugs that are harming our body is a breach of the sixth commandment. Taking unnecessary risks, endangering our lives, living on the edge is a transgression of the sixth commandment because we are toying with the sacredness of life. But let me add to that also that too much work, stressing ourselves and exhausting ourselves, even in lawful ministry, is a transgression of the sixth commandment.

God gave us that example as He Himself stood away from His work on the seventh day to rest, to refresh Himself. He created the day and the night. When we ignore these patterns and work and work, we also transgress the sixth commandment. So before we examine, then, lastly the hidden layers of the sixth commandment, let me briefly touch on three exceptions dealing with “thou shalt not murder, or thou shalt not kill,” the first already alluded to, given in Genesis 9:5–6, dealing with capital punishment.

God specifies all human life is sacred. If a beast, a wild beast, kills a man, that beast had to be killed. He’s dangerous. But, if a man kills another man, God calls us, man, to shed the blood of the killer. Hear His Word, “Whoso sheddeth man’s blood by man shall blood be shed.” And the reason, as I already stated, is because he has been made in the image of God. Now, don’t make the wrong application. God does not tell *you* to take revenge. He lets that and gives that to the proper authorities to execute His vengeance. Listen to Romans 12:19 where God says, “Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place to wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay.” If you move on to the next chapter, in Romans 13, then you see that God has ordained government to be that channel by which He repays the sin of murder. So, God’s will for capital punishment shows how He values our human life. He sets this protective boundary around life to make everybody think twice before they would take the life of another.

Now, the second exception, of course, on “thou shalt not kill,” would be the issue of just war. The issue of war is very complicated, and I’ll keep it simple and very short in this lecture, but the Bible does nowhere condemn legitimate warfare, which generally will involve the killing of fellow human beings. Augustine correctly stated, “All war is evil, but not everyone’s involvement in war is evil.” That’s because “thou shalt not kill” has a reverse side. I have a responsibility to preserve and to protect the life of others and to make it as good as possible for them.

And on [the] basis of that instruction, nations are duty-bound to intervene if an aggressive neighboring nation or other nation crosses the boundaries and begins to kill inhabitants of a land or their own land, violating the basic human rights of human beings. An example is Nazi Germany invading other nations but also killing

off the Jews and many other groups of people. It was the moral duty of the free nations to combine their strength and to declare war on the Nazi Empire. As sad and as terrible as such a war is, the killing of people that occurs in just war is not a transgression of the sixth commandment.

Now, a third related issue is the issue of Numbers 35. In that chapter, God establishes that an accidental killing of our neighbor does not result in capital punishment. That's the sin of manslaughter. Accidentally or by neglect, we may be the cause of someone to die. Now, every country [has] their laws on that, but God forbids that such a person would be killed.

Now then lastly, the deeper layers of the sixth commandment come to light in Jesus's teaching in the Sermon of the Mount in [Matthew] 5:21–24. Jesus's very [insightful] deepening of the sixth commandment teaches us that we can murder someone without drawing any drop of blood or without literally ending a human life. The Heidelberg Catechism expounds really brilliantly these words of Jesus in this sentence. "In forbidding murder," it reads, "God teaches us that He abhors the causes thereof, such as envy, hatred, anger, and a desire of revenge. And He accounts all these as murder." Even farther, any word or gesture by which I dishonor or wound my neighbor is considered murder.

Friends, we think when we hear, "thou shalt not kill," 'Well, that's not me.' But when we look at Jesus, probably all of us are most guilty on the sixth commandment. The teachings of Jesus in Matthew 5 teach us that any anger that is expressed in name-calling, in belittling, in using words that hurt is murder. Use the example of *Raca*, that means *empty head* or *idiot fool*. Anytime we use these words that hurt the person's spirit, his inner being, we murder. Anytime we dishonor a person's spirit, even when we give him a cold shoulder or we give partiality to the rich and despise the poor, as James teaches us, we murder.

So let's remember, not only violence that disfigures a person's body and kills a person's life is murder, but also the sin of slander, the sin of gossip that destroys or disfigures the person's spirit. Anger that cuts down a person is a slow murder. And controlling and dominating and humiliating and wife-beating, punishing actions in the marriage, is the slow strangling murder of domestic abuse. Using your knife to kill someone is murder, but using your tongue in words that kill is murder. And, Jesus calls such in danger of hell fire. And even if it doesn't come to an action, or even if it doesn't come to a word spoken, if I nurse within me hatred and the wishing of hurt or even death on someone, I'm breaking the spirit of the sixth commandment.

God commands me to do everything to preserve and to protect, to maintain and honor, [the] spirit as well as the body of the neighbor that I am living with. The Westminster Confession or Catechism gives many examples of the duties listed in the sixth commandment, and I will just merely read them to you to hear what the sixth commandment requires. God requires we love our neighbor with "charitable thoughts, loving thoughts, with compassion, with meekness and gentleness, kindness, peaceable, mild and courteous speech and behavior, forbearing one another, also a readiness to reconcile, a willingness to forgive injuries, a rewarding good for evil" (Question 135). All [those] are applications dealing with the sixth commandment. Undoubtedly, we all feel, 'Who can take his hand out of his bosom on the sixth commandment and not be guilty of murder?' Only One was innocent of any transgression against the sixth commandment, and even when they were murdering Him as they nailed Him to the cross, notice how Jesus responds, not with insulting words, not with denouncing their actions, not with calling the wrath of heaven to fall upon them. No, He obeys the spirit of the sixth commandment when He prays, "Father, forgive them: for they know not what they do" (Luke 23:34).

So, as we close together, coming away from the sixth commandment, we must feel guilty. And please, let us remind ourselves that we are not expounding these commandments as a ladder to climb up to salvation or as a ladder to earn forgiveness. We are only expounding them for two reasons: one, to show us the utter need for Jesus Christ to wash, to cleanse, subdue our iniquities, to renew and sanctify us, so that we may be truly holy; and secondly, we are expounding the commandment so we may learn how to live and how to love in reflection of Him Who made us in His image and therefore protects our life with this commandment, "thou shalt not murder." Thank you, friends. May God bless these words.

Lecture 14

THE SEVENTH COMMANDMENT

Solomon wrote that it is better to live in the corner of a housetop than with a brawling partner in big palace. The reason for this is simple. Nothing is so satisfying as a harmonious relationship. A beautiful house is no compensation for a broken and betrayed heart. For the most beautiful relationship God designed is between a married man and woman. To protect this from being harmed, God legislated the 7th. Many forces seek to destroy the gift of marriage. Either by wounding person before they are married or by breaking into the relationship once married. That's why the 7th commandment needs our attention.

TRANSCRIPT LECTURE 14

Welcome, dear friends. I have given this topic the title *Purity in Sexual Passions*, and it is of course based on the Scripture from Exodus chapter 20 where God commands us, "thou shall not commit adultery." When we began the commandments [with] the first one, you noticed that the first commandment demands exclusiveness in our relationship to God. We are not to go after other gods or other lovers, and the Scripture defines, often, this idolatry that leads to apostasy as spiritual adultery. It was for our good that God gave us that command to prevent us from hurting in losing this precious relationship He established with His people. Now, this seventh commandment is in some way closely related to the first. Our lawgiver draws a protective boundary around our most precious human relationship, and that is the marriage between a man and a woman.

So today, we will look at what the details are of the seventh commandment. But before, let us consider a seventh principle that we can derive from the Scriptures in James 2:10. James writes there, "for whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all." That's an important principle, and let me first illustrated it with a picture, so we understand what James is teaching. Let's consider the law of God as a circle. Inside the circle is obedience, the honoring of the law. Outside the circle, wherever outside the circle, is disobedience or the breaking of the law. What James is saying in this verse in James 2, [is] that wherever we cross the circumference of this circle, it doesn't matter where we step out of it, when we step out of it, we are guilty, we step outside of the circle in the area of disobedience.

So no matter where or how we step out, it could be in a very evil act or it could be as little as a wicked wish, both of them are steps outside of the circle. And therefore James [writes], "for whosoever shall keep the law and yet offend in one point he is guilty." I'll bring it into this example. Let's take a man who has stolen a horse. He is guilty of theft, even though the rest of his entire life he's never stolen a penny. He is guilty. All other acts of obedience to the law don't cancel the one act of disobedience to the law. So, what is the principle out of James's verse? The man who sins once is guilty before the law of God even if all the rest of his life he is perfect.

And that principle makes, therefore, every sin worthy of death. We considered, as we looked in the last commandment that murdering your neighbor is a major transgression of the [sixth] commandment, while belittling him is not so major. And yet, God teaches us that though there is a difference in degree of sin, both make us guilty as we step outside the circle of God's law. So, [it's an] important principle to keep in mind, also when we now look at the seventh commandment which we have called *Purity in Sexual Passions*.

Now friends, I have to do some groundwork to understand this commandment well. And therefore, my first thought that we will together discuss [is] what is the function of sexual passion? And the second, what are the boundaries God has established for expressing our sexual passion? And thirdly, what is the intention of these boundaries? So, let's begin first thinking together what is the function of our sexual passions? God as a Creator has created us people with sexual needs and desires. To have sexual passions, needs, desires, urges, is as much a matter of our creation as having physical hunger and thirst for food and drink. There is no sin in having hunger for food. There is also no sin in having sexual desires and needs. There is also no sin in having sexual relationships and doing sexual activities as long as we are within the boundaries of God's will.

And that's an important truth to bring to your attention, especially to those of you who are perhaps still struggling with a sense of wrong or guilt about sexual activity even within the marriage relationship. This basic principle that sexual actions are [good] within marriage is clearly established in the Scripture in many, many places. Let me just highlight a few to liberate our thinking sometime from all the wrong impressions and teachings perhaps that we have gleaned over the years of growing up. If you consult Proverbs 5:15–21, and you look at what there God is teaching us through Solomon's writing, and God makes a statement: we are to be ravished always with the sexual love of our spouse. That's a very strong word *ravished*, filled with joy of that gift. When we turn to the next book of Solomon, the Song of Solomon, and I'm skipping Ecclesiastes although he spoke there also about the positiveness of living joyfully with the wife of your youth, Song of Solomon 4 and 5 speak most beautifully and honorably about the privacy and intimacy of the sexual relationship between a husband and a wife.

And if we turn in the New Testament to Hebrews 13:4, the apostle writes, "marriage is honorable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers," those are people that visit prostitutes, "and adulterers," those who break the marriage vow, "God will judge." Now for your interest, the word *bed*, "the bed is undefiled," in the Greek word is literally the word *koite*. That is the word *intercourse*. So, God says that activity within the marriage life is undefiled. It is His gift and not only His gift. As I will show you, it is His will for us to live like that. Nowhere, nowhere is Scripture anywhere teaching that the sexual passion between a husband and a wife is some excusable evil that needs to be tolerated for the multiplying of the human race. That is a blatant opposite teaching of the holy Scriptures.

Now that sexual actions are not taboo in God's view can also be concluded, friends, from considering how our Creator designed our bodies. The sexual activity within His boundaries was created to be an intensely pleasurable and satisfying experience. God designed our bodies with hormones. That was no accident. That was a forethought that all played into this experience. He even designed our sexual organs to provide a physical delight. Again, not without its purpose. He wanted His creatures to enjoy the physical intimacy within the marriage life between a man and woman, husband and wife, for it would deepen the joy of their relationship. So, God not only designed it. God also commands it.

If you examine [for] yourself I Corinthians 7, you note that Paul writes something about sexual activity within marriage. [It is] not only allowed, but it is commanded. I am to render as a husband due benevolence to my wife, and my wife [is to] render due benevolence to the husband. And, Paul is not talking in *due benevolence* about kindness. He is speaking there about sexual activity. In other words, he says it is my duty as a husband to fulfill the sexual needs and desires of my wife in marriage. And why? That we will not give Satan opportunity to tempt us.

So therefore, take note from Paul's teaching that our primary goal and focus in sexual activities in marriage is to satisfy the needs of my spouse, not self-directed first, not to have my needs met, but to have her or his needs met. Your spouse's needs come first. And again, friends, that reveals that devotional love that speaks to all these commandments which God wants to be reflected in how we live together. Sadly, through the deep fall in Paradise, this pleasure experience of sexual activity has now become a massively destructive force in our hearts and in the life in which we live. And now, to curb this sin that is destroying people personally, [from] a young age to

old age [both] inside and outside marriage life, to curb that evil, God has placed the seventh commandment as a fence around these sexual passions to keep them pure.

So, let's sum up this very first point by a picture. I compare sexual passion to a fire. We all know that fire has a tremendous potential to provide joy. In the appropriate fireplace, a fire warms the house. It makes a house cozy, but that same fire outside the fireplace can burn the house down. One spark can start a house fire or a forest fire and destruct it. That's what God is after. He knows how destructive the sexual passion can be when it is taken outside the fireplace He has designed: marriage life. Take it outside there, and we burn ourselves, wound ourselves for life. That's what He wants to prevent by "thou shalt not commit adultery."

So, that leads us now naturally to ask, 'what are the biblical boundaries then for the expression of sexual passion?' Now, the first boundary is clear from Genesis 2. That's marriage life. You can read there beautifully how God instituted marriage life and made Adam discover that being alone is not good. Then, He created him a helpmeet to fit him. What a joy it must have been when the Creator introduced the woman to Adam and officiated the first marriage when He gave the words, "Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother and cleave unto his wife and they shall be one flesh." God's permanent, permanent institution of the marriage life [is that] in which the one flesh relationship alone is permissible. And [how] I know that's the permanent one is that God spoke "every man shall leave his father and his mother." Well, Adam and Eve didn't have a father and a mother, so God is here speaking to theirs and all subsequent marriages forever.

And let it be clear, therefore, to us that [a] sexual relationship between a man and a woman, no matter what age, is never considered a private activity by consenting adults or youth. Sexual activity is by God's law only permitted within the covenant relationship of marriage. And indeed, though Solomon in some way hardly qualifies to be an authority on marriage life, yet as God's inspired spokesman, we do well to consider his teachings in Proverbs 5-7. And look at this picture in your mind, as it were, when he says, "Can a man take fire in his bosom, and not get burned? Can someone go on hot coals, and his feet not be burned?" And with that, picture again, [if we] take the sexual activity outside of the marriage situation and relationship, we will burn.

This seems highly unnecessary, but within our modern society today, it is necessary that we keep reminding ourselves of the obvious: a marriage is a covenantal relationship between one man and one woman. God commands a man to cleave and to be one with his wife. Genesis 1:28 commands us to be fruitful and to multiply. This act involves the union of a man and a woman as any basic biology book will teach us. For a lightbulb, I need a bulb and a socket. For a marriage, we need a man and a woman. That be obvious to all of us as we face these winds of doctrinal and practical error. Now from this point, let us look through the Scripture at the boundaries that our lawgiver has more specifically drawn around our sexual passions.

I'll review the main ones with you. Any sexual activity between unmarried people is forbidden. Sometimes that's called fornication. Let me give you one example. In I Thessalonians 4:3-7, God warns and exhorts that we are to possess our bodies in sanctification and honor, abstaining from fornication. He warns against taking the sexual activity outside of the relationship of marriage, and God warns against the sin of sexual passion as lived out in unrestrained sexual activity. And then, He adds to this, this very note of warning. He says, "That no man go beyond and defraud his brother in any matter." And in this context, that matter is sexual matters. Why? "Because the Lord is the avenger of all such, as we have forewarned you and testified." And how does God avenge? Well friends, sometimes just through the memories, which disturb and which harm the beauty of a future marriage. Protect this precious gift by staying within the boundaries of God when you are unmarried and single.

Now secondly, any sexual activity between married people with others that are not married or married, other than your spouse, is forbidden, and the Scripture calls that *adultery*. This sin of infidelity to the man or woman to whom you committed yourself in marriage is one of the most destructive acts to the beauty of the marriage relationship. Over the years of my pastoral ministry, I've dealt with many cases like this, and I've hardly seen ever that the marriages broken by adultery can be restored to what it used to be or what it ought to be. It is therefore that God allows the spouse against whom adultery is committed to divorce from her spouse that committed adultery. He allows it. He doesn't command it, but He knows how disastrous this act of adultery is to the health and well-being of the marriage. And marrying an adulterer or adulteress who has been unbiblically divorced from his or her spouse is clearly forbidden by the Lord as well. You can study that from Matthew 5:31-32

and Matthew 19:9. And all these commandments of the Savior underline again and again the seriousness of the sin of adultery.

And thirdly, any sexual activity between family members is forbidden. You take open the book of Leviticus 18, you will notice clear examples of these relationships of family members. This is called the sin of incest. God's will is clearly declared when repeatedly throughout the chapter He says, "none of you shall approach unto that is near to kin to him," family member, "to uncover their nakedness" (Leviticus 18:6). *To uncover their nakedness* is a phrase that catches all sexual activity between family members. It is from the slightest physical sexual touch to the fullest act of sexual intercourse. God forbids. If this sexual activity happens between adults, children or teens, it's called sex child abuse. And in most countries that is considered a criminal offense and for right reasons, for nothing is so disruptive to the child or the young person than to be sexually abused by an adult in their youth. And, God wants to protect this flower, this beautiful gift of our sexuality. He places this boundary around it. And let all of us do all to honor these boundaries.

Now when we come again to the teachings of Jesus in Matthew 5:27–28 in the Sermon on the Mount, we notice that the sin against the seventh commandment goes much farther than the actions I have outlined so far. Let us listen to Jesus's words. He says, "But I say unto you," regarding the seventh commandment, "That whosoever looked on a woman to lust after her has committed adultery with her already in his heart." Again, Jesus addresses here the heart sin that lies before the act of adultery. On the basis of this teaching of Jesus, the Heidelberg Catechism's instruction in Question 109 again is a beautiful summary. Let me read it to you. It answers the question about whether the seventh commandment only forbids adultery and such like gross sins with these words. "Since both our body and soul are temples of the Holy Ghost, God commands us to preserve them pure and holy; and therefore He forbids all unchaste actions, gestures, words, thoughts, desires, or whatever can entice men thereto."

And may I then speak for a moment to us men as well as to the women in our audience? Let all hear this last statement, "and whatever can entice men or women to any such act of sexual passion in a wrong context." Women, we entice sexual thoughts and desires in a man in how we dress. We can be as Satan's agent to lead other men, normal, healthy men created by God, astray by the way that we dress. Now, I suspect that many girls and women do this out of ignorance, but they ought not to be ignorant. By the way we dress, or rather undress or alluringly dress, we become a source of temptation to any normal, healthy man. No, that doesn't mean at all that we men have no responsibility about what we do with our thoughts. That's between God and us, but it certainly also directs you to act and dress responsibly. And though we usually limit Jesus's teaching to the men, it is of course also wrong for a wife to lust for the emotional and the physical love of someone else that is not her husband.

But there are also many men who are guilty of leading women astray in the seventh commandment. And how do we do that, men? By giving inappropriate emotional and physical attention to a woman that is not our wife. In I Corinthians 7:1, the apostle writes, "It is good for a man [not] to touch a woman." And the word in the Greek *touch* has the literal picture of kindling a fire. It is not good for a man to kindle a fire in a woman. Now, we men know what kindles a fire in us men. That goes to our eye gate. But what kindles a fire in the woman? That goes to her feeling gate. And therefore, we men are to be extremely careful in how we deal with the women around us. We kindle inappropriate fires that may lead to adultery by giving a woman other than our wife attentive listening or emotional support or personal, social time or financial gifts or even the slightest physical touch. So, let us be guarding ourselves also in that regard not to stir sexual passion in women that are not our wife.

This instruction of the Lord Jesus, friends, also covers the sins of pornography in movies and pictures, the lusting and the masturbation that takes place in connection with pornography is a horribly destructive sin to yourself and to the relationship with your present spouse or even your future spouse. Oh, God is sharing His concern about this fragile sexual person within us by wanting to protect us against the evils of pornography. Pornography not only defiles the mind and the body, but it also sexually abuses and exploits girls and women as if they're toys and not persons. And besides, it will complicate your future marriage as it leaves a destructive wake in a person's mind with vile memories and unrealistic expectations that will ruin the beauty of a future marriage intimacy. Of course, it will also destroy your present marriage. Women who discover their husbands in pornography feel the exact same betrayal as they feel when they catch their men, their spouse, their husband, with another woman.

So, let me conclude. What is now God's intention in this so clear boundary around sexual passions to remain pure and holy? Friends, it is to protect something that is so beautiful and so tender. As a child grows up, he's like a flower bud that will begin to develop his sexuality into a beautiful flower. Anyone who begins to poke at this little flower bud is destroying the future of this flower, and it will never be restored when we open up this flower bud too early. So those who sexually abuse children and young people will forever mark them and harm them in their sexuality. God knows the destructive force of such action. God knows how many people are driven in prostitution or are driven into homosexual relationships only to escape the pain and the indignity that has been brought upon them through sexual abuse. God knows the biological footprint that pornography causes in a person's mind. He wants to protect us. God knows that when a marriage relationship is invaded by a third person, it will never be the same.

God also knows how strong the power of sexuality is that He created in us, and therefore repeatedly warns us in the book of the Song of Solomon, "I charge you, O ye daughters of Jerusalem," the unmarried ones, "...that you stir not up, nor awake [my love], till he please," or till it is the right time to awaken this fire of the sexual passion. Proverbs 7:24, "Hearken unto me now therefore, O ye children, and attend to the words of my mouth. Let not thine heart decline to her ways, go not astray in her paths. For she has cast down many wounded: yea, many strong men have been slain by her. Her house is the way [to] hell, going down to the chambers of death." Do you again feel, see, experience God's caring love that places this rigid fence around that which is so personal and so fragile and so beautiful? And, that is our gift of the sexuality lived and experienced out in the marriage life.

And again and again, friends, I want to remind you the lawgiver is a God of devotional love to seek to make your and my life the most beautiful and the most holy. And that only will be so when we abide in the pathway that leads to safety and happiness. May God bless these instructions on the seventh commandment to us all. Thank you.

Lecture 15

THE EIGHTH COMMANDMENT

The love of money is the root of all evil. Though Scripture supports this truth with so many examples, yet mankind doesn't learn. Greed causes us to lay hands on that which isn't given to us. It is very unsettling to find your home robbed and precious possessions taken away. Therefore, it is God's goodness to legislate the 8th commandments. But the extent of 'not stealing' is much broader than literal theft. God also calls us to be good stewards of what He allows us to possess on earth.

TRANSCRIPT LECTURE 15

Welcome, dear friends. Today we will focus our thoughts on the eighth commandment: "Thou shalt not steal." And, I've given it the title, *Handling God's Resources*. Before we look at the eighth, let's think about an eighth principle, which we derive from the Scriptures in Matthew 12, and which the Westminster Catechism sums up as follows. It writes that 'what God forbids is never to be done, and that what God commands is always to be done.' And that part is simple and straightforward, but then they add the sentence, "Yet, every particular duty is not to be done at all times." That particular sentence can raise a few eyebrows. What is meant with that? And, it is tied in with the Scripture from Matthew 12:1-9, and I encourage you to check out that passage as I speak about it.

Jesus is confronted by a charge that He and His disciples are violating the Sabbath Day. According to the Jewish pharisaical law, plucking a head of wheat and rubbing it between your hands and eating it is the work of harvesting and reaping and obviously forbidden. And so, Jesus answers them in that context and tells them that necessity allows a law to be set aside if a life is at stake. He therefore brings in the example of David eating the bread of the table of showbread in the Old Testament, and Jesus shows that the priest and David did no wrong when they transgressed the ceremonial law which limited the showbread to be eaten only by the priests. There was an overriding need for mercy as David and his men were fainting with hunger. So therefore, Jesus sums up this incident in verse seven with this principle, "but if you had known what this meaneth, 'I will have mercy, and not sacrifice,' ye would not have condemned the guiltless."

The principle that Jesus lays down is that no ordinance of God is to be pressed as far as to make us neglect the duty of charity or emergency. The first table of the law is not to be so interpreted as to make us break the second when we face an urgent need of a fellow human being we are to love. And again, there are situations in our life in the sinful, broken world where there are these conflicts of law versus law. So, Jesus teaches us that there are times we must choose mercy above duty, and that's what that sentence meant or means in the Westminster Catechism when it says, "Yet every particular duty is not to be done at all times." Let me, obviously, caution you and myself. There [are] many of us who take this principle as an excuse to break God's law and indulge themselves far too easily or cover up a sin by appealing to this argument, and that is not ever what our Lord intended.

So, having looked at that eighth principle relating to the law of God, let's now turn our attention to the eighth commandment: Thou shall not steal. I've titled it *Handling God's Resources*. So, there are three particular thoughts that we want to work through. First, what is the truth about what we own? And secondly, what are the limits in how we acquire possessions? And then thirdly, how am I to be a good steward of my possessions? So, these three things are interrelated with the eighth commandment, "thou shalt not steal."

What is the truth about what we possess, or what is the underlying assumption in the eighth commandment? The eighth commandment assumes that we personally possess resources, things; and most of us, of course, will think about cars or cows or land or money. And indeed, the material assets [are] part of that, but there [are] far more resources that we possess or that we are given. Everything that God has created and everything that He even has re-created in the life of grace is God's.

Now, let's think that through for a moment. The air that we breathe, the sunlight we soak up, the land we walk on, all these things are God's resources that we may use but not waste, not exploit, not pollute. But, think about the resource of time, your and my health, the strength God gives us, or in a different level the positions He has given us as a husband or as a father or as a leader, as a manager, or even the talents that He has given us. We have a variety of talents. Every one of us is talented in different ways, which are God's resources given to us.

Some of us are skilled with our hands, and we are repairmen, or we are builders. Some of us are good with our head, and we're inventors. We are engineers. We organize, or we're leaders. We give advice. Others are very good with their heart. They're compassionate. They're good listeners or counselors, or perhaps are in the medical, nursing or doctor, field. They desire to help fellow, suffering men. There [are] even others who are artistic with music and painting. All these are resources that God has given us, even the gifts of grace which God gives in the [lives] of His people. Peter points out in I Peter 4:10, "As every man has received a gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God." Well, what kind of gifts is Peter thinking of? Well, the gift of teaching, the gift of compassion, the gift of hospitality or leadership or listening, all kinds of gifts that God has given for us to use for Him.

So, let's remind ourselves [that] this great Creator, this sovereign Possessor has determined the limits or the size or the number of our resources in our life. Proverbs 22:2 states that really clearly. It reads, "the rich and the poor, they meet together, but the LORD is the maker of them all." So, instead of grumbling at God's sovereignty and providence in which He has decided how to divide the various resources among mankind, we would be more satisfied and far more profitable when we faithfully use what God receives.

"Thou shalt not steal." In fact, think about it this way. We often forget [that] we ourselves are possessions. We don't possess ourselves. Our Creator possesses us. He's the upholder, the provider, the maintainer of us. He made us for His purpose, for His advantage, for serving His kingdom and His cause to do His will. And in some way, isn't that already convicting us when we think about the eighth commandment, "thou shalt not steal," when it comes to, "How do we handle the resources God has given us to handle?" We don't own our possessions. We are the stewards of God's.

Psalms 24:1, let me just read a few Scriptures to remind us of this truth, "The earth is the LORD's, and the fullness thereof; the world, and all they that dwell therein." Or, in I Chronicles 29:11-12 David writes, "For all that is in heaven and in earth is thine;...both riches and honor come of thee, and thou reignest over all; and in thine hand is power and might; and in thine hand it is to make great, and to give strength unto all." What a beautiful confession [of] where everything comes from that we own or possess, or rather, that we are the stewards of. Psalm 50:10-11, the Lord reminds us very nicely, "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." Someone who really remembered this was Job. You know the story when the Lord took away everything in one day, except his wife. What a grand confession, "The LORD gave; the LORD has taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD" (Job 1:21).

So, to sum up this first thought, stealing begins long before I reach out to my neighbor's goods and make them mine. Stealing begins when I consider myself the ultimate owner of the earthly or material things that I have or the talents I have been given. So, "thou shalt not steal." What are the limits of how we may acquire our possessions? Again, before we consider the directions about not stealing, let's consider the principle that forms the basis of the eighth.

We have a right to private possession, though we remain stewards. If that wasn't the case, there was no need for the eighth commandment. Then, God did not have to forbid us to steal. God assumes that His creatures have a right to private ownership. I may therefore consider some of these things as mine or yours. I'm given the right to use it, to enjoy it, to handle it, to expand it, to do something creative with it, or to multiply it. [It's] given to me as a stewardship. Yet, I am not the ultimate owner of it. That all remains His. So, because of that, nobody has the right to take what God has given me on his own accord. "Thou shalt not steal." God has protected private property. And therefore, friends, a forced redistribution of wealth in money or land *isn't* anywhere a biblical command. What happens in the early church in Acts 2:44–45 was a voluntary giving of those who had extra to the needy, not a forced redistribution.

Think of God's great men and women in the Bible. I particularly think of Abraham and Job. They both were rich men, and they had many servants, but they didn't redistribute their wealth among all their servants that they had. So therefore, if money or property has been lawfully inherited or lawfully acquired through your hard work or your wise business investments, then we are [to] consider them as God's gift to us to use and to manage our wealth on His behalf, to His glory, and of course the service of our fellow man. So, having established that, let's now then look at what the lawful, or even unlawful, means by which we are acquiring or not acquiring our possessions.

First, the lawful means. Obviously, [that is] by working hard, using your talents and your resources in a responsible and a godly manner in order to provide for yourself and those who are dependent on you. God commands us, when we are healthy and able, to work six days a week. He frowns on slothfulness. He frowns on those who live from handouts from others while they are capable of providing for themselves. Listen to Ephesians 4:28, where God forbids, 'thou shalt not steal other people's goods.' And these words are followed by, "but rather let them labor, working with his hands the thing which is good, that you may give to him that has real needs." It shows clearly [that] the Lord is implying that those who are not laboring with their own hands to provide are stealing.

Likewise, Paul exhorts in II Thessalonians 3:12 that with all quietness we are to work and to eat our own bread. Once again, back to the book of Proverbs chapter 6, God sends us to the ants and to the school of ants. 'Go to the ant, thou sluggard; and consider her ways and learn' (verse 6). And, God shows the wisdom, the beauty, and the diligence of the ant, providing [for] themselves for the future. So, He commands hard work, and He condemns slothfulness or wastefulness of what He has given us.

We are to love our neighbor as ourselves. That also means that we work in order to provide for ourselves as well as to share when, of course, we have enough. And once more, to support this is the parable Jesus spoke in Matthew 25:14–29, and Jesus uses the example of the very diligent versus the very slothful steward to set in place the command "thou shalt not steal." He praised those who have lawfully used their talents to increase their talents to more, but he who failed to use his talents was severely rebuked. And the point? "Do not steal" means, "use your resources; don't depend on others, but provide [for] yourself through hard work, diligence, [and] wise investment." Those are the commands that the Lord gives us in this eighth commandment.

Now, working hard applies, of course, to all lawful callings that will provide not only what I need but also may increase what I have. All callings that honor the 10 Commandments in every aspect [are] lawful callings, whether that's in the trades, in the business, in the service industry, in the science world, in the medical field, in the ministry, military, or government. The callings in which we honor the ten are lawful occupations and are worthy, each one of them in their place. And as long as none of them pursue practices that are dishonest and fraudulent or merciless, we are to pursue them. Think of John the Baptist as he faces the soldiers, I assume Roman soldiers, he doesn't tell them "quit being a soldier." He tells them, "Stop being violent," sixth commandment. "Don't accuse anybody falsely," ninth commandment, and "Be content with your wages," tenth commandment (Luke 3:14). And so, if they may pursue this soldier task without these sins, they are doing right.

There are times that the call to follow Christ means that we are to give up our job, or we are to sever our business relationships, or we ought to step away from alluring positions. Jesus calls His disciples to cut out the right eye and to cut off the right hand (Matthew 5:29–30). He's talking about events or positions or sinful temptations that may lead us astray, and that not only applies to the seventh commandment. That also applies to the eighth commandment. Anything that leads us from the narrow way to the broad way, we need to cut out. So therefore,

if there are cases where our economic position or our financial activity would bring us into conflict with the law of God, then clearly the call of Christ is that we need to separate ourselves from that.

But, let's remind ourselves, for those of us who have felt this pinch, also financially, and the temptation to become dishonest or to cut corners, let's remind ourselves of the promise that Jesus gives us in Matthew 19:29, 'Everyone that has forsaken houses or family or lands,' may I add? jobs or positions or opportunities to be rich, "shall receive an hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting life." Moses stands before us as the hero of faith when he despised the riches of Egypt as worthless and [would] rather associate himself with God's people, and God reminded us that "he had a respect to the recompense of the reward" (Hebrews 11:26). Moses knew what he gave up would be more than compensated by what he received.

So, God forbids in the eighth commandment any unlawful means in acquiring what is not yours. Obviously, "thou shalt not steal" means we do not take what doesn't belong to us. Recognize here God's loving devotion. The things I own, the things that I handle, the things I've built up in my business or in my farm, we begin to in some way really admire or esteem it. It's part of us, and there's a certain pride in that as well, and the Lord protects that. "Thou shalt not steal." Do not lay your hands on what others have been receiving or what others have been given. He builds a fence of protection around the little kingdom that He has given us to handle or to manage on His behalf.

But, God also forbids in the eighth commandment any unlawful means to gain possession of things or of titles or positions. Those in sales break the eighth commandment when they are deceitful about their products to sell something above its worth and to hide certain weaknesses or faults on it. [In] taking advantage of the ignorance of the buyer is the eighth commandment broken. That's not a good deal. That's a nasty steal in God's eyes. Using false measurements, false calculations, [playing] around [with] the statistical numbers to provide an incorrect picture is the transgression of the eighth commandment. At work, if we [are] working for an employer and we waste our paid time and let it be interrupted with unnecessary phone calls or we record a dishonest number of working [hours], we are breaking the eighth commandment.

If we are on the world market of investments, our method must not be speculation or taking a quick advantage of some inside knowledge to make large gains at the expense of the loss of others. That is not loving your neighbor as you would like to be loved. Investment in a company stock is a legitimate business, but using inside knowledge to make excessive gains at the expense of others would be a transgression of the spirit of the eighth commandment. In the world of writing, stealing somebody else's words is a theft if those words aren't acknowledged. In the world of music or manufacturing, stealing somebody's ideas and then using them to make your own product is a theft in God's eyes. In the world of its insurance, we steal when we inflate a claim or hide the real story about how the dent came into our car in order to profit from the business of insurance to cover our own mistake. That's stealing.

And we steal when we through dishonesty or slander gain a position or gain a promotion. That's stealing again. We steal when we evade the taxes of our country. God clearly speaks of that in Romans 13:7, "Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; and custom to whom custom is due." If we are an employer, we also steal when we do not give our workers an adequate wage, when we pay them [insufficiently] for them and their families [to have] enough provisions. That is stealing, and James rallied against this form of theft in James 5 when he really charges the rich with the sin of stealing from their workers. So friends, "thou shalt not steal."

God also [makes] that application spiritually. You and I are not our own creators. God has made us more talented, perhaps, than others, but they are His talents. They're His gifts, and we are to use them for His glory, and to use them for our neighbor's well-being. Be careful, therefore, with undue praise to yourself [for] what really belongs to your Maker, to the Author or Originator and Enabler. The apostle Paul asked in I Corinthians 4:7 when he sees all this competition and praise among the Christians, he says, "Who maketh thee to differ from another? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive? Now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hast not received it?" We did not create our bodies, nor our minds. They were all formed by our Creator to be the temple of the Holy Spirit. What a theft of Him when we use all that for our own glory, our own name, our own comfort, our own increase.

Let me not then omit to remind you that God has given us one commandment to remind us continually that all we are stewards of His resources, and that is the command to tithe. One tenth of our income belongs to God.

Malachi spoke on behalf of God when he writes in Malachi 3, “Will a man rob God? Yet you have robbed me. But you say, Wherein have we robbed thee?” And the answer is, “In tithes and in offerings” (verse 8). Yes, to give a tithe is a test of faith, especially when your budget is tight and your bills are many, but don’t forget God’s promise to those who faithfully honor Him in returning what is His to Him. Listen to the promise He promised. He says, “Prove me now herewith, saith the LORD of hosts, if I will not open unto you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, and there shall not be room enough to receive it” (verse 10).

God’s command to tithe is not only a spiritual test, of course. It’s also a practical way to provide for the financial needs of His church and His kingdom, mission work and all the other activities that are done for His sake, in and through His church. It’s a spiritual test, indeed, to remind us again that we own nothing. We’re only stewards of what is the Lord’s. That’s a spiritual test, is tithing, to make us face the innate covetousness that we all have deep in our heart. But friends, how much sweeter is a life in which we aren’t owned by our possessions or we aren’t owned by our drive to enrich ourselves, but rather we own our possessions to enrich others and to serve our Creator.

So then lastly, how am I to be a good steward of God’s resources? Well, that’s the reverse side of “thou shalt not steal.” That is, “thou shalt give. Thou shalt donate. Thou shalt share.” The Heidelberg Catechism sums up [again] this duty of the eighth commandment in a beautiful sentence. It says, “That I promote the advantage of my neighbor in every instance I can or may, and deal with him as I desire to be dealt with by others; further also that I faithfully labor,” Why? “so that I may be able to relieve the needy,” and therefore not to be abusers or waste His gifts. So again, “thou shalt not steal” is “thou shalt give.” Listen to John the Baptist when he gives us very practical instruction. He says to his hearers if they have two coats, well then share one of them with a cold neighbor (Luke 3:11). [Isn’t] that what we should like to receive when we are cold?

Quite instructive is James’s passage in James 5. Only 40 years after the great Pentecostal beginning of the church, he needs to write [to] church members that are rich [about] stealing. And how did they steal? Well, listen to this. James preached about the gold and silver that is eaten away with rust. The word is *cankered*, *rusty*. In other words, the gold and silver is unused. It is collected. It’s hoarded. It’s too much. It’s rusted. It is of no use to the people that own it. But in the meantime, it could have been used help those around that are needy. And James says that rusted gold and silver will be a testimony against us in the Day of Judgment. Then, he goes to the garment, to the clothes closet, and he speaks about the garments that are moth-eaten. In other words, they’re hanging in closets unused, instead of hanging around the shoulders of fellow men. And the point that James is making is [that] we are stealing when we have all our leftovers and our extras and we store it away, rather than distributing it or sharing it with those that are really needy.

The apostle Paul concludes the first letter to Timothy exhorting the rich not only to watch against trusting in uncertain riches but also, and there it comes again, to be good, ready to distribute, willing to communicate, to share (I Timothy 6:17–19). So, “thou shalt not steal.” Did you know that no earthly subject gets as much attention in the holy Scriptures of God [as] the subject of money? God knows where our chief dangers lie and therefore hammers home on the details of the eighth. One pointed parable [about] how the rich hardly enter into the kingdom of God [shows] the dangers of money (Matthew 19:24).

Some years ago, there was a competition about the best definition of money, and the best definition chosen was this one, with which I will end this lecture. It says, “Money is an article which may be used as a universal passport to everywhere except heaven, and money is a universal provider of everything except happiness.” So with that, we’ll conclude this topic on the eighth commandment. May the Lord bless it. Thank you.

Lecture 16

THE NINTH COMMANDMENT

Witness bearing is a huge responsibility. It can make the difference of a life or death. It has saved nations from destruction and individuals from unjust sentences. It may prevent accidents and clear up crimes. But It may also lead people astray from the right path, and even from God. Therefore, God directs us to watch how we bear witness or share information. To limit the 9th commandment only to telling lies in court settings is therefore shallow. The 9th deals with something we do daily, namely, how we use our tongue! Words are vehicles, not only of thoughts, ideas or truths, but mostly of love.

TRANSCRIPT LECTURE 16

Welcome, dear friends, in the lecture on the ninth commandment: “Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor.” And together, I want to consider this subject under the title, *Wholesome and Healing Communication*. As you will see, the ninth commandment is not only about lies and dishonesty. It’s about our words, how we communicate. Before we look at that in detail, let’s consider the ninth principle, and that reads that sin is never a single sin, but one sin always leads to and entwines itself with other transgressions of other commandments.

And the best way is to illustrate that with David’s case, David’s sin with Bathsheba. First, when he sees Bathsheba, he lusted in his heart. He coveted his neighbor’s wife, the tenth. At the same time, undoubtedly, he’s committing adultery in his heart, so it intertwines with the seventh. Next, he abuses his royal power [when] he commands her to be brought into the palace. That’s the fifth commandment issue. And upon the act of adultery, the seventh commandment, he added lies to cover up his tracks, deceit. When all that fails, he resorts to breaking the sixth commandment and added murder. And he kept on covering up his foul deeds for some time, which is again the ninth commandment.

You see, all the commandments of the second table are intertwined with one commandment. One sin that he did [initiated other sins]. Yet, when David reflects in his confession in Psalm 51 he says, “Against thee, thee only, have I sinned.” For him, principally, the guilt was against the first table of the law. So, he felt indeed that that sin also intertwined with the first table of God’s commandments, particularly the third. He had taken the name of God in vain, acted in a horrible manner as a representative of the name of God. And therefore, he prays in Psalm 51, “Build thou up the walls of Jerusalem.” He broke them worse than the enemies ever could, [but] that’s not where the trail of sin stops.

David’s sin also includes Bathsheba’s sin. It includes Joab’s sin as he committed murder by following the directions of David in his treacherous plot to kill Uriah. It leads to his own children’s sins as Absalom and later on also Amnon fall into grievous sins [likely] inspired by David’s terrible example. So, the principal: one sin often intertwines or leads to other sins. It makes the apostle James make this positive direction in the last verse of his

book when he writes, “Let him know, that he which converteth a sinner from the error of his way,” *the* error of his way, “shall save his soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins.” One error leads to a multitude, so let that be an incentive for us to do all we can to seek to reach our neighbors who are going into [an] error, a sin, so that it doesn’t become more sins in him or others around him.

That leads us then to the ninth commandment in this day: “Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor.” Let’s consider the ninth by thinking through the following questions. First, how does God value communication? Secondly, how are we to express our love in the way that we communicate? And third, what are His directions to safeguard our neighbor’s well-being through our communications?

How does God value communication? And before I look at that, let’s for a moment think about the ninth. It appears to speak only about lying: “Thou shalt not bear false witness.” That’s one layer. By now, we should have gotten used to understanding that there are many layers in these commandments. When God says, “Thou shalt not take my name in vain, use it in a frivolous and irreverent [way],” that is the lowest way of the abuse of the name, but that didn’t exclude the cursing or the blaspheming. And so, it is also with the ninth. Though it mentions one layer, and perhaps one of the most important layers, it doesn’t exclude the rest of the way we use our words, or rather, the way we communicate.

Now, communication is important to God. Notice what Jesus said in Matthew 12:36, “But I say unto you, That every idle word men shall speak, they shall give an account of that in the day of judgment,” every idle word. Communication matters to God. And therefore, indeed in the Scriptures, the tongue and the mouth have a major attention in the teachings of God to us. One of the verses you will hear coming back in this lecture is the one from Ephesians 4:29, “Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers.” That ties in with a verse from Proverbs, which compares our tongue, a wholesome tongue, to a tree of life, whereas a perverse tongue causes a breach in the spirit of a person (Proverbs 15:4).

Now, God values communication for three reasons. And, the first is that communication and our ability to speak is part of the image of God in us. He created us with the ability to put our thoughts and our ideas into words. Look at the first book of the Bible, in Genesis 1, notice that God begins the Scriptures with ‘And God spoke.’ Words, words that created, words that communicated life and beauty and order and harmony in a chaotic and void world. Now, that use of the words that God there shows is a model for us. We’re not to use words as weapons to fight and to tear down and to destroy. We are to use our words as vehicles to minister grace to the people that hear us, that we speak to. That’s the subject that we are dealing with in the ninth commandment.

The second reason that God values communication, friends, is because God knows that words spoken hurt more than stones and sticks. Words can be daggers. Words shred people in their inner being. And even if those nasty words, untrue words are recalled and confessed as wrong, they don’t remove the scar. And therefore, God shows a tender concern in this ninth commandment that we would use the gift of communication not in the way that the devil uses it, to destroy and to hurt, but to use it as He uses it, as a tree of life to bring grace and healing, joy and satisfaction. ‘Words [fitly spoken],’ Solomon says, “are like apples of silver in pictures of gold’ (Proverbs 25:11), what a beautiful imagery. And so, we are to use the gift of communication.

The third reason why God values communication [is that] He knows how important it is in our relationships with one another. Deep joy, close intimate relationships can only be established through the gift of communication. When I place my thoughts into words [and] share those with someone else, we bind relationships into a greater intimacy and a greater beauty and a greater depth. We are distinguished from animals. They also communicate, but they bark, or they shriek, or they sing. They don’t share their ideas. They don’t share their thoughts, the hidden things, with each other. They don’t create beautiful poetry or beautiful letters in which we speak to someone else to minister into the deepest levels of their life.

And, the bonds of the relationship become only closer and closer, the more that we discover and share with each other in and through the gift of communication. The fruit of that is harmony, is the beauty of love and the beauty of trust. And again and again, we are to remember that that is the intention of every one of God’s commandments, to bring to us the happiness that flows out of being devoted in a holy, pure love to one another. So therefore again, the ninth commandment, friends, is not only about lying. It is about God’s direction, how to use our words as His gift to maintain and to deepen and enrich our relationship with each other.

And again, I may borrow the words of the Heidelberg Catechism. They add to the exposition on this ninth this comment, that we use our communication to “defend and to promote, as much as I am able, the honor and the good character of my neighbor.” That is the commanding part of the ninth commandment, and what a beautiful example we have of that in the Persons of the holy Trinity. The way They speak about Each Other, honor Each Other, also in the revelation of the Scripture, is beautiful. They never slander. They never rumor. They never say bad things about Each Other, but They exalt, communicate love, deepen, as it were, through Their communication the beauty of the relationship. Although, I realize that doesn’t deepen at all in a perfect God.

Now then, how are we to express our love in communication according to the ninth commandment? First, of course, I am not to tell an untruth about our neighbor means we are to tell the truth, bear a true witness about our neighbor in a court session. That’s very important to God. God demands the death of a false witness in a court session because He knows what damage it does when I bring a false witness. It could mean someone else’s death, or it could mean his life. It could be his freedom, or it could be his imprisonment. So, we are to speak the truth. Also, when we’re not asked, and we know the truth, we have a responsibility to bear witness of the truth. Well, isn’t that what is included in the sum of the commandments as Jesus says, “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.” When accusations against you are leveled, and someone knows the truth, you would appreciate if he or she would come forward and bear witness to the truth in that situation.

To bear witness or no false witness, also means I am to tell the truth in all non-court sessions. Our Lord taught in the Sermon on the Mount that our *yes* be *yes* and our *no* be *no*. We are to be countercultural. Lying is so common in our culture, wherever we are or live, but how often we are not guilty of it too. We make a promise and then don’t keep it, never maybe even intended to keep it. That’s a lie. When we twist the facts to make the story prettier, that’s a lie. When we exaggerate just to impress someone else or to get our way, that’s a lie. We are to strive to speak the truth, to love the truth, but also to deal in truth with one another.

In the context of Ephesians 4, the chapter on communication, Paul writes to the congregation of Ephesus, “Wherefore put away lying. Speak every man truth with his neighbor: for we are members of one another” (verse 25). Now, the apostle’s referring there about struggles and stresses and strains that are happening within this congregation, and he instructs them to put away lying in the sense of, ‘Brethren, don’t keep these things covered. Don’t ignore these sin issues. Deal with those things that are destroying your relationship, that are dividing you. Deal with them. Speak the truth in love. Don’t sweep it under the carpet. Don’t ignore it, but speak the truth in love and so build the relationships with each other.’ And therefore, the ninth is not just not to tell a lie.

The ninth also means that I have to do the opposite, to promote the advantage and the good reputation and the character of my neighbor. Oh, lying is the devil’s business. It casts a shadow over a character. It may destroy or wound my reputation and may end beautiful relationships of friends, of spouses, of a minister in the congregation, of a leader and his subjects. So again, friends, let’s go back to Ephesians 4:29. God calls us not to let corrupt communication proceed out of our mouth but that which is good to the use of edifying that it may minister grace to the hearers. Now, when we examine this, and let us do that closely, how our words are used, are they corrupting the feelings of someone else? Are they stirring up anger? Are they hurting hearts? Are they dividing friends? Are they defaming a character? Are they straining relationships? Or, am I ministering grace, unity, closeness, honor, respect, nourishment to those who hear me. All that is the intent of the communication that God calls us to use.

So then now, let us conclude with the third. What does God then teach us how to safeguard our neighbor by the way we communicate? Well, let’s turn away from Satan’s example of communication. This father of lies, as Jesus called him (John 8:44), began all the trouble on this earth with lies, but notice in Genesis 3 not outright, straightforward lies. He’s devious in the way that he twisted the truth. And so, when we are to safeguard the well-being of our neighbor and honor the ninth commandment, “Thou shalt not bear false witness,” let us then indeed consider some details of how we do [that].

We are not to twist the truth. The truth can be twisted in such a way that I am promoting deceit. Satan did that very cleverly when he approached Eve. He made God look evil. He made God look [like He was] withholding instead of giving. Just listen to how he put these words to Eve when he approached her and said, ‘Yea, did God

say you cannot eat of every tree of the garden?’ But that’s not what God said. God said, ‘You can eat of every tree of the garden, except this one.’

God’s revelation is generous. ‘You can eat as much and as often as you want from all these trees I have made. Except, there’s one I don’t want you to eat from.’ Satan just twisted that, didn’t he, twisting the truth and making it feel like God is restricting you: ‘You cannot eat of all the trees of the garden?’ Now, what did this twisting of the truth do? It took Eve off guard, and it led her astray. It broke the relationship between God and her, between her and her husband. That’s what lies do, what twisting the truth does.

Now, the second devious strategy of Satan that is contrary to the ninth is [that] he exaggerated the truth, as well of course as lying. Straight out he said, “You shall not die.” He made God a liar, but he also exaggerated the truth. Well, listen to what he says. Besides the straight lie, “you shall not die,” he also said, “You will be like God, knowing good and evil.” Indeed, Adam and Eve would know good and evil. They would know the difference, but they would not be like God, for they would turn out to be haters of the good and lovers of the evil.

So, exaggeration is when I inflate the facts about what you did or what someone else did or what might happen in order to lead someone astray. There are many reasons why people exaggerate, but all of them are evil, and all of them are to hurt our neighbor or to get our way. It may be to get someone’s favor and win their trust. I may exaggerate to make a better impression about myself or to make someone else feel bad about their success when [I] exaggerate [my] own. It’s all negative, harmful. It destroys the beauty of relationships, which is the heart of joy. Let’s remind ourselves again and again that all these directions that God has given us in the summary of His original law [are because] He cares for us, for our happiness.

Therefore, the third way that we are to guard [the] well-being of our neighbors is [that] we don’t gossip truth. Gossiping is usually dealing with two things. Something may be true, but something may not be kind, and certainly not necessary, to be shared with someone else. And, gossip is doing that purposely. Gossipers aren’t defending or promoting the person but breaking them down by sharing with [others their] faults or failures or magnifying them. That’s a common sin, even found among Christians, when we hide our tale-bearing behind [an] appearance of being concerned. “I would like you to pray about so-and-so because he or she did this or that.” Examine your motives. Is it the story you want to share, and you want to hide it behind some religious cloak? Gossip, friends, deeply wounds the reputation of others, and lead others to condemn others harshly or unheard.

God also forbids slandering, spreading rumors, which usually are about untruth. This goes beyond gossip. In slander, I scatter facts that I do not even know are facts. They’re unverified, maybe hearsay. And that’s not only a sin again that occurs in political life, [but] that’s a sin that occurs in Christian life. One Who was greatly slandered was our Lord Jesus Christ. The religious leaders spread stories, slandered Him. ‘He desecrates the Sabbath Day. He is a friend of sinners and publicans in the sense [that He associates] with them. He’s a drunkard.’

How destructive that sin of slander is is well illustrated by the well-known story of the minister who told one of his members, who was always slandering names and people’s lives, [to take] a goose feather pillow and to go on a tower and spread all the feathers over the village. And she did and came back to him and said, “I did it.” And then he told her, “Now, go back into the village and gather all those feathers that you scattered.” And upon her [exclamation], “That’s impossible!” then he drove home the sin in her life. “And all the stories you share of others that are not true are like those goose feathers.” Let’s avoid, *hate*, the sin of slander.

Now lastly, God also forbids flattery. Flattery can be with truth, or it can be with untruth. It can be exaggerating something, or it can be with not telling the real facts. Flattery is giving someone insincere praise only to advantage yourself. Yeah, you want to get in the good book with your boss, and you praise him up and down, even though his performance was poor. Or, you may tell someone she’s beautiful and lovely and wonderful to flatter her in order to get favors. It’s well said that gossip is saying behind the person’s back what we would never say in his face, and flattery is saying to the face what we would never say about someone behind his back. So, keep reminding yourself what communication does. It builds up. It breaks down. It ministers grace, or it ministers hurt. It corrupts, or it edifies. So, all the above are but a small beginning of the great subject of communication.

And let me alert you in closing, that there is also wordless communication that falls under the ninth commandment. We can talk negatively without saying a word. My body language can be a powerful communicator, but as not ministering grace to the person that I meet. Some use the silent treatment in connection with their spouse. Some are ignoring or sidelining someone with the cold shoulder or turned away face. That’s not

communicating grace. That's against the spirit of what communication was given for, to minister. A wink, a smirk, all are negative. Whereas, a smile or a kind word or a nod and a warm look can communicate grace to those who are receiving it. You know that research tells us that in communication only 10% is in what we speak, the words. The tone of our voice, some say, is 40%. The nonverbal language of our body is 50%. And all that also must be included when we think about the ninth commandment: wholesome and healing communication.

David wrote in haste, "All men are liars." We know there was one exception, but he was true about that: the rest of men are. Jesus Christ was no liar. His mouth always spoke the truth in love, seeking to minister grace to the hearers in His public discourses, in His private conversations, undoubtedly in His personal thoughts. And friends, therefore, when Peter, one of Jesus's closest apostles, writes in the first book, second chapter the first verse, about the sins against the ninth commandment, he says, "Wherefore laying aside all malice, all guile, all hypocrisies, all envies, and all evil speakings," notice how many of these words are tied up the ninth commandment.

In that same chapter, he draws attention to his great Master. He'd heard the slanders against his Master. He felt, to some extent, the suffering He suffered when he heard those lies about his Master. But, he writes, as he recalls his Master's example, "Who did not sin, neither was guile found in his mouth. When he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but submitted himself to him that judges righteously" (I Peter 2:22-23). Some of you may feel the pain of the slander, the lies, the injustice [of] false witnesses, the devilish destruction through fiery tongues, gossip, or hypocritical praise. Do as Jesus did. Commit yourself unto the Father Who judges righteously.

So that brings us to the end of the ninth, and that will lead us to taking up the tenth lecture in our next one. May God bless these words. Thank you.

Lecture 17

THE TENTH COMMANDMENT

Young Saul was religious. He was zealous for God. He was one of those who thought he kept God's law perfectly. He claimed to be blameless in obedience. That is until God enrolled him in the divine law school. Then God made him face the 10th commandment. For the first time Saul understood that the 10th wasn't just the 10th. This commandment had a bearing on all other nine. Upon understanding that, Saul admitted that he died. He died to his self-esteem and his false hope. That discovery, however, was the beginning of a new life.

TRANSCRIPT LECTURE 17

Welcome to the study of the tenth commandment. I have given this lecture the title, *The Command to Be Perfect in the Obedience of Each Commandment*. The words of the tenth are as follows, given by the Lord in Exodus 20, "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 his donkey, nor anything that is thy neighbor's." Now any of you who have ever climbed a mountain knows what it feels like when you finally reach the top. [There is a] sense of relief when you have finally reached the top and see the beauty to which you have climbed, but I have to disappoint you that such will not be the feeling when we have finally reached the tenth commandment. Though it is the last commandment, it is by no means the least of them.

Do you recall in our very first lecture when we together looked at the overview of this course, I described that our journey would be a journey to go to Mount Sinai? We looked at the various aspects, and then when we came to consider the law of God, I used the analogy of a building, a building of 10 stories, but as you will discover today, the tenth story isn't actually a separate floor. It is better to consider the tenth as the internal structure and wiring of the entire building. As such, the tenth commandment is not the summit of the law, but rather, it's a spiritual heart of each commandment that God has given in the previous nine. And therefore, friends, be prepared. Analyzing the tenth commandment will prove to be the most revealing, as well as the most devastating, to our mistaken self-image in relationship to our obedience to God's commandments.

None described that discovery better than a man called Saul of Tarsus, later on the apostle Paul. For a period of time, Saul of Tarsus was the star of the class, and he thought himself to be the star of the class also. He wrote that he thought of himself as the most blameless servant among all the Pharisees, till God pressed home the tenth commandment, "Thou shalt not covet." And Saul saw that even his life that sparkled with religion was an utterly defiled sinner life, and he shared that he died to his own self-image. You can read it in Romans chapter 7. It was the tenth commandment that had made the apostle Saul first, later Paul, see the depth of his sins.

Therefore, I like to compare the tenth commandment, and in some way, all of the commandments, to the medical technology the MRI. In former days, we had x-rays which gave you a frontal view or a side view of certain

parts of your body, mostly your bones. But the MRI provides us a slice by slice picture of every part of our inward body: our brains, our heart, our veins. And not like the old x-ray, from one angle, but no, the physician can look [with] the MRI [at] every angle inside of us. And that is, in some way, what I desire to compare the tenth commandment to. It's like an MRI: how we keep all nine commandments.

We remember that each lecture I have begun with a principle before we delved into the commandment itself. This last one, I will not do that. The reason is that the tenth commandment is our tenth principle, and that's reflected in the title, *The Command to Be Perfect in Each Commandment*. So, consider together with me what does God now really forbid in the tenth, and what does God command in the tenth. What does God forbid? God does not forbid us to covet, but God forbids us to covet what is given to our neighbors.

The word *covet* has a very positive meaning. It means to earnestly desire something strongly. It is to crave or to want or to yearn for something. And though we usually think of the word *covet* in a negative context, it is also a positive word used in the Scripture as a direction, as an approved behavior. Let me give you a few examples out of the New Testament. In I Corinthians 12:31, the Holy Spirit inspired Paul to write, "but covet earnestly the best gift." And what is the best gift? Charity, love, Godlike love. We are to covet that. That's not only permitted. That's commanded.

In I Corinthians 14:39, the apostle Paul has been teaching about the spiritual gifts that were given to the New Testament church, and in that connection he writes, "Wherefore, brethren, covet to prophesy." The best gift in all of these gifts was that we could teach people from the Word, expound the Word of God. That's what [is] meant with *prophesy*. Paul says, covet that. How much better if so much of this coveting would be found in our lives, to covet to be godly, to covet to be humble, to covet to be used in God's kingdom as a tool in His hand, to covet to have an increase of the knowledge of God in our life. Those are positive [examples of] coveting.

I Timothy 3:1 doesn't use the word *covet*, but the apostle speaks approvingly about a man who desires the office of a bishop. He yearns to be used in a leadership position. It's not disapproved. It's a good coveting. Proverbs 18:22 speaks about finding a wife [as] a good thing. Now, prior to finding a wife lies a yearning to find a wife. That is a coveting, an earnest desiring, a yearning. That's not bad. That's not sinful. So therefore, the tenth commandment doesn't forbid [coveting]. It forbids us to covet sinfully, and coveting becomes sinful when I desire to possess what belongs to another or [something] to which I have no right.

In Habakkuk 2:9, the prophet refers to one who covets with "an evil covetousness to his house." That word *evil covetousness*, that is when I so badly want to have my neighbor's house, or I desire my neighbor's spouse, or I want his children or his servants or his business or perhaps his title or his position or his status. Whatever I desire of my neighbor's in a sinful way is coveting, and coveting then means that I am consumed with the desire. I must have it. Maybe even the means I would use to obtain it would be wrong and sinful. That's coveting. And of course, we all need to be watchful that a lawful desire can often become an unlawful desire or become an evil coveting.

Children are a gift of the Lord, and it is natural for every couple to covet, earnestly desire, the gift of children in their marriage. That's legitimate, but a desire that would make me now jealous about seeing someone else having children becomes evil covetous, or it makes me to use unlawful means to generate children, or it would lead me to steal a child. Now, a lawful desire becomes an evil covetousness. Even when it makes me somehow rejoice in the loss of what my neighbor has, [that] is a coveting that is evil. Evil coveting is a silent killer and a deceitful pathway. It not only blinds us to what we have, [but] it also may lead us astray in actions that are sinful. So that's the surface of the tenth commandment, "thou shalt not covet." But there's much more, friends, to the tenth commandment than these few remarks I have made.

Let's read again, the tenth says not, "thou shalt not be covetous." It says, "thou shalt not covet." That goes much deeper. Let's again recall, and step back for moment, what is the law? What did we learn about the law of God in these lectures? The law is the reflection of our Maker, the reflection of the heart of the being of God. We were made in His likeness. We were made to reflect His likeness in how that we live and how that we love, not only in the various attributes but in being perfect, in being sinless. And that was reflected [in] how we live before God and how we live among our neighbors. That was how God made us to be.

And now God commands us in the tenth commandment, 'Be you perfect in keeping each one of the nine commandments.' God demands a total likeness with regard to each commandment to His own being. From the very roots of our existence, from the very inner being, He wants us always, at all times, in all circumstances, to

reflect His perfection: “thou shalt not covet.” The Heidelberg Catechism Question 113, and the answer, gives us this very fitting exposition on the tenth commandment. Let me read the whole exposition first. It reads, “That even the smallest inclination or thought contrary to any of God’s commandments,” notice any of the nine, “should never rise in our hearts; but at all times we hate sin with our whole heart, and delight at all times in all righteousness.” That is the heart of the tenth commandment.

I could liken it to the laws of leprosy. One tiny speck, one hair turned white, declared someone unclean totally as a leper. And so it is with the tenth commandment. In the tenth, God declares that any desire or any thought against any of His nine commandments that He has given us is forbidden. No, it shouldn’t only dwell in our hearts. It shouldn’t only live or [be] allowed to be in our hearts. No, as our catechism expounds, it should never rise in our hearts. “Thou shalt not covet,” I said, is different than “thou shalt not be covetous.” No, not even the smallest desire against any of the nine commandments should rise up in our heart.

The pinch of the tenth commandment goes [really] deep. It goes into the deepest layers of our heart in our daily existence. Let’s just think when we are tired, stressed, and strained, and in that condition we are provoked, now what does the tenth tell me? That not even is the desire to yell, or to get back, or to pay back, is to arise in my heart. The moment it rises, I break the seventh or the sixth or the eighth. That is itself already wrong, but it shouldn’t even rise in my heart. “Thou shalt not covet.” Anything. When others around me prosper, let’s take it that way, when others around me have more than they could wish, while I am struggling, when others are having joy, while I suffer setback upon setback, *thou shalt not covet* means no thought begrudging them their prosperity should even rise in my heart, or no jealousy [in] which I wish to snatch a little of theirs should rise in my heart, or no secret joy when finally loss pays them a visit should rise in my heart. “Thou shall not covet.” That should not come up.

Or, take the example of a farmer who is honoring the Sabbath Day. The sun shines. The harvest is late, or the hay is [lying] on the field, and tomorrow rain is in the forecast. “Thou shalt not covet.” What? No wish that Sunday might be over and we could harvest. That would be a transgression against the fourth. Or, no jealousy of our neighbors who got in their harvest should rise up in our hearts. Can you feel how deep this tenth commandment goes? In the tenth, God commands we keep all other nine with perfection. God commands us to **be** holy, not just to do holy. To be holy goes to the inner core of our being.

In the tenth, friends, God sets out the basis for all other nine commandments. It comes before your actions, before your words, before your thoughts. Our heart is only to be a fountain of crystal flowing into whatever we think or do or wish or imagine. And therefore, in the tenth commandment, God reaches to what we call the original sin. That murky, foul fountain of our hearts is not allowed to be there and not allowed to act, but that is our deepest need.

Now the reality of original sin is grossly denied and ignored in our society more and more. The secular world doesn’t want to hear about the sinfulness of our heart. The natural desires and tendencies of our heart are to be given space to be expressed. Man needs liberty, we hear. He needs the liberty to live out the desires of our hearts, as long of course, that we don’t harm others. But, whether it offends God or whether it contradicts God’s ordained will with regard to marriage or our sexuality or society or church, that’s not important as long as we are given the liberty to be ourselves. That’s contrary to the tenth commandment. God’s will is: thou shalt not covet anything against the pure and the perfect law of love to God and our neighbor, not in our thoughts, not in our words, not in our deeds, but no, not even in the very fountain of our own heart.

Now if you sense that this spiritual MRI of our soul deals a deathblow to your self-image, then you felt it well. Is that what the apostle wrote about in Romans 7, when he experienced that God came to him with “thou shalt not covet”? He died to his own self-image. So that’s what God forbade in the tenth commandment, but now what does God demand in the tenth commandment? That’s even harder than what He forbade. The only way we will really understand the depth of the tenth commandment, friends, is to take our starting point with God Whom we are to reflect in our life as we were created to be.

And, Jesus commands us in Matthew 5, “Be ye perfect as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.” And what does that mean? What does *perfect* mean? That means that we hate all sin with our whole heart. Hate is an intense word. Hate is not only feeling; it’s also action. To be perfect means that we hate all sin with our whole heart. We all have our bosom sins, our personal sinfulness, be that pride, power, sexual lust, love of money, prestige,

control, pleasure. Now, perfect means we not only fight and resist these sins and cut them out, but we are to hate. All these sins ought never to rise in our heart. We are to reflect God. We are to be like Him. It is not in God's heart. None of these sins are in His heart. They ought not to rise in our heart.

To be perfect means we are to hate at all times all sin with our whole heart. We all have our moments when we feel like indulging our pride, or our evil lusts and our suggestions. [It is] especially those moments when we're alone or when we're in private that Satan will redouble his efforts as he did with Jesus in the wilderness. But here is the pinch of all true religion, not only to say no to Satan and his lies, but to have always a perfect heart against anything he suggests at all times, in all circumstances. Is that the end and the extent of being perfect? No, the Heidelberg Catechism has one more statement. It says that "we delight at all times with our whole heart in all righteousness."

Now, notice the word delight. God delights in righteousness. We are to delight, to take pleasure, to find enjoyment, not in just the good things of life, but in righteousness. Now what does righteousness mean? It means to be right and to do right. Righteousness, friends, means to delight to turn the other cheek and to delight in doing it. Righteousness is delight to go the extra mile and to delight to do it. That is righteousness. We are to delight ourselves in being ready to forgive those who have offended us, and then to do it with readiness and joy and delight. That's righteousness.

Can you see how deep this command goes in this last one given on Mount Sinai? God in the tenth commands or directs our attention to our heart in relationship to each commandment. That's why I said it's not quite like a tenth floor. It's like the internal structure and wiring of all the nine floors. It flows through all of them. We are to exhibit, God says, in every commandment the reflection of the heart of our Creator. Who doesn't feel overwhelmed at the depth of this commandment? But can you also see why this is so vital? And why this is lying at the heart of the joy and the happiness and the beauty of our life with God and with each other? God's intention in this tenth commandment is only to make us feel overwhelmed. His intention is to make us feel convicted, cut to the core, to drive home the truth that we need a Savior.

And friends, that truth even is driven home more when we remind ourselves that the sins against all of the commandments are un-erasable from our side. Human means are inadequate to deal with sin. These sins in the depth of our being, as I brought out now here in this tenth, often escape our attention. And really, all we have done in these nine lectures, including this tenth one, of looking at the law is just the tip of the iceberg. It's just the scratching of the surface about what it is to love God with all our heart, mind, strength, and soul, and to love our neighbor as ourselves to the degree that Jesus loved. God has lifted a little bit of the ignorance about the state of our guilt. And, let's agree; it is a fearful condition that meets the eye when we begin to look in the mirror of God's law and see the reflection of ourselves.

So, let us end this lecture then on the law of God not on this note only. God's law, as we have often said, is His means to reveal sin, but not His means to remove it. It's the mirror to show how guilty and how filthy we are, and we have noticed that even in this commandment. God will use the law as a hammer to break our pride and to humble our ego, and the more we hear the voice of the law of calling us "Do," the more we should realize that God's intention by bringing that home to us is to alert us to the voice of the gospel, which proclaims "Done." And therefore, I want to close this tenth commandment by directing your attention to what John the Baptist said as he stood at the river Jordan, "Behold, the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world."

The last Adam came to give Himself for sinners, sinners who stand guilty before their righteous Judge, sinners who have sinned against a majestic and a holy God, and sinners who have nothing to appease Him Who is a consuming fire to all that is unholy. And, John directed all eyes to Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world. How did He do that? He came to fulfill the law. Recall Matthew 5, "I came not to destroy the law but to fulfill it." Not only [was] the way of living and loving God and His neighbor a fulfillment of the depth and the demands of the law, but also the way of sacrificing Himself for sinners in the ultimate gift of love when He died on the cross [was a fulfillment of the law].

And therefore, may I remind you of an old preacher's saying, 'Our hope as fallen sinners lies in the doing and in the dying of the Lord Jesus Christ.' He is the door, the only door, for a transgressor to return to God. God cannot, and He will not lower His standard of the 10 Commandments. He will not be satisfied with less than perfection. And now in Jesus Christ, He has provided for us a law-obedience that honors Him to the highest degree.

Hesitate not to turn also to the Lord Jesus Christ, that great High Priest, for He is able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God through Him. And therefore, heed His urgent call.”

Having gone through these 10 Commandments, who doesn't feel heavy-hearted when we fail to do on every count what our gracious God calls us, and our holy God demands us, to do. And therefore, Jesus stands also this day before us saying, “Come unto me, all ye that labor to try to keep the law, to try to honor the law, to try to take away the guilt, and are heavy laden, come unto me, and I will give you rest.” And what is that rest? That rest is in His sacrifice as the payment of sin. That is in His rest of His obedience as the pillow of peace, and that is also the rest in His ability and power to make us walk in the way of holiness.

Thank you. May God bless these words. We have one more lecture to consider together about God's law and eternity.

Lecture 18

THE LAW IN ETERNITY

And God spake all these words, saying... That's how the Ten Commandments begin as recorded by Moses. After the majestic proclamation, from the top of a smoking mountain, God wrote the TEN Himself upon two stone tablets. Though the stone tablets today are lost, the significance better not be lost on us. They were meant to be permanent. They are still the reflection of God's perfect will and Being. They declare how love really is to look like in our devotion to God and our fellow man. But what will be place and content of the law when Jesus will usher in the new world under a new heaven? Will Mt. Sinai's law be history?

TRANSCRIPT LECTURE 18

Welcome, dear friends, to the last lecture in our series on the law of God. It's going to be on the title, *The Law of God in Eternity*. In our journey to study the law of God, I hope you recall that we started out with looking [at] and considering the glory of the lawgiver and the relationship of Him to the law. And we discovered that God's glory is revealed to us not only in the creation, the material world, but also in a moral way in the beauty of His holy law, in the Scriptures often celebrated as the beauty of His holiness (I Chronicles 16:29, Psalm 96:9).

As we finally came to consider the law itself, we noticed that even in the lawbook, rather uncommon for lawbooks, the glory of God was shining through at various points. It already begins at the preamble when the Lord reminds us of the gracious context in which He has given us the law. In the second commandment that comes through in that word *mercy*, in which He promises mercy even though we don't perfectly keep the law. No one does. In the fifth commandment it spoke about the promise of a prolonged and a blessed life when we honor the fifth.

So, we learned from that to see that God's law is not just a rigid rule book of the do's and [don'ts] of a sovereign King telling us, 'This is how I want you to live.' No, we've seen that the law is the rulebook to guard the relationship between God and us and between us and others. That was the original intent of the holy law of God. They are also to define our relationship with each other. God's laws, therefore, are not just simply to be obeyed for the sake of obedience or submission. In the law He declared His love and concern and reveals how that we can live in this earth, enjoying the beauty of life and the beauty of our existence within His universe. Jesus put it very briefly in one short statement in John 13, when after one of His beautiful examples of His devotional love, he writes 'happy, or blessed, if ye know these things; happy are ye when ye do them' (verse 17).

These things that Jesus speaks about was the devotional love He showed to His disciples when He washed their feet, not only of His devoted disciples but also the feet of Judas Iscariot. Blessed are we if we do these things. And that ties in with what we learned about God's holiness, not only to define it as sinlessness, though that's a good definition. Holiness is more than that. It's the word to describe the devotional love of God that is pure and

exclusive and that is intense and permanent. And this character of God's devotional love is the essence of His being and also is in a sense the essence of the law. As Jesus taught us, the law is summed up in one word, all 10 Commandments: love.

Now none loved as perfectly and none loved as devotionally as the Lord Jesus Christ. But there we see the extent of what love means. Loving God devotionally meant that He took His Father's cup and drank it to the bottom, and loving your neighbor as yourself meant that He lay down His life and chose hell above heaven to show the extent of the devotion. And so, let's remind ourselves again and again that what we learned is that love is the essence. Jesus reminded the Pharisees [of that], and we learned that in one of our lectures, when He [implied that] loving our neighbor and loving God is more than all burnt offerings and sacrifices, [as one of the scribes inferred from His earlier teachings] (Mark 12:33), more than every expression of religion.

So after we considered in some depth, the lawgiver, we have thought about the first humans in Paradise. We saw they knew God's law, the original one, as written in their heart. And we concluded that, from what we read in Romans chapter 2 where Paul writes about man, fallen man that is, even in these fallen conditions and even without the knowledge of the law of Scripture, mankind reveals the imprints or the glimmering remnants of what previously was there. We can read it in Romans 2:14 when Paul refers to the Gentiles which don't have the law and yet do the things that are written in the law to a certain extent, thereby showing the work of the law written in their hearts. Even their consciences are bothering them about things that they do or don't do.

That first lecture about the first Adam brought us to consider the last Adam, Jesus Christ. He came as a sinless being in the world, and He taught that He didn't come to destroy or cancel or change or rewrite the law, but He came to fulfill it. So we studied, as we looked at Jesus's life, what fulfilling the law looked like. And there are various aspects to that word, but what is most [relevant] for this discussion today, [is] the aspect that He fulfilled the law in living out the details in the obedience and service to His Father and to His neighbor. And that connection for your own personal devotions, if you go to I Corinthians 13, the great chapter about the love or charity, read it once and substitute for the word *charity* the word *Jesus*, and you get the most complete portrait of love as Jesus was and as we ought to be.

Now in this last lecture, I want to explore now what that law means in eternity. What will the status be of God's law when He has gathered His elect into a new heaven and new earth? Is God going to replace the law then? Is it going to be rewritten or adjusted to a new world, or will the original law still be in place? My conclusion is after studying the Word of God on this question that the original law that was written on the heart of Adam and Eve and lived out briefly in the time of perfection in Paradise will still be the law that will govern humanity, redeemed and renewed, in a new earth. That law that was rewritten at least in its beginning stages in the heart of God's children in regeneration and sanctification, that will be the law in perfection as God brings His people in the new world. And so, in my conclusion, I want to support with seven evidences this law in eternity as the abiding and eternal law for God's redeemed people. What are these evidences?

I have seven, and the first goes back to that simple statement that God wrote with His own finger the law on two tables of stone. Friends, no part of the Scripture has ever been written with God's personal finger on two tables of stone. He didn't delegate it. He didn't allow anybody else to do that. He did it Himself to declare the importance, undoubtedly also to declare symbolically the permanence, of the law of God. Moses passed away; Aaron passed away, and the Israelites that stood around Mount Sinai passed away, but the law of God today abides forever. It is not without reason, I think, that in the holy Scriptures we find seven times recorded that God wrote the 10 Commandments with His own fingers in two tables of stone. That's my first argument.

My second evidence for this hope, or for this conviction, that the law in eternity will be the same is that God's Word records His covenant promise to His elect church in Jeremiah 31:31-34. Without reading the entire passage let me lift out at least a few statements. God says, 'I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and Judah, not according to the covenant that He made with their fathers, which they break, 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. I will write it on their hearts. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbor, for they shall all know Me from the least of them unto the greatest.'

Now what law would that be? What law will God write in the latter days on the hearts of His people? Will it be a different law than He wrote on the heart of Adam and Eve? We considered that already as we looked at God's

law and the saint. Now friends, would God then write the law of the 10 Commandments on this people here to rewrite or to change that on His people when they have gone to glory, really undo what He wrote on their hearts here when we have arrived in the eternal habitation? No. The Scriptures record that faith will pass, and hope will end, no more needed, but charity abides forever, and charity is the sum and substance of the law of God.

The third support is that God's Word records Jesus's emphatic teaching about the permanency of the law of God in Matthew 5:18. He says there, "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." How unreasonable for us to conclude that after the present heaven and earth literally have passed, then also God's law would pass away. That implies a change in God's character. That implies a change in the reflection of the law of God, and that is not needed nor possible. So therefore, we can only conclude that that same law will also be beyond this heaven and earth, and that brings me to my fourth supporting evidence: God's Word prophesies the coming of a new heaven and a new earth.

In the book of II Peter [and] in the book of Revelation, prophecies were given about a new heaven and a new earth. Now the word *new* in the Greek has the meaning of something renewing, something made new that is decayed or weak or old, not brand-new and replaced by something totally differently new, but something that was there and is renewed. One illustration that will make the word clear is referring to our regeneration when God gives us a new heart. That new heart is not a totally new person. It is a heart and a person that He regenerates, He renews. He removes the sin, and He removes the results of the Fall, and we will be the same person without sin. And that's the word *new* referring to the new earth and the new heaven.

Peter adds that in that new earth and new heaven, which is this place renewed, dwelleth righteousness. Now, righteousness is a key word in the Old and New Testament. It means to be right and to do right. It is [to be] conformed to a standard of right, and that right is nothing else but the law of God. That was the righteousness of Jesus Christ that He obeyed the law in everything He was and everything He did. Is it reasonable to define the word *righteousness* which will dwell, inhabit, will be the environment of the new heaven and a new earth to be a different righteousness than the one that we are reading about in the New Testament teaching about the work of grace?

God's Word in the fifth place gives us more about the condition of the new earth and the new world in a beautiful and a moving prophecy in Isaiah 11:6-9. Let me take a moment to read these well-known words about the wolf that shall dwell with the lamb. [That is] unusual. 'The leopard [will] lie down with the kid.' It's not happening today. 'The calf and the young lion and the fatling [will be] together, and a little child shall lead them. And the cow and the bear shall feed, and [their] young [ones] shall lie down together. The lion shall eat straw like the ox, and the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand in a cockatrice' den. They shall not hurt, nor destroy [in all] my holy mountain. For the earth shall be full of the knowledge of God as the waters cover the sea.'

Now, this beautiful prophecy is not speaking about a heavenly zoo, but it's speaking about the condition that will be there when God has renewed the earth. The animals must be considered as pictures of different characters, different people, different personalities. The differences today are often the cause of friction in our sinful world. The strong dominate the weaker ones. The bold intimidate the timid ones. [There is] destructive behavior, foul competition, stinging backbiting. It hurts. It destroys. In heavenly glory, there shall be none of that.

No one shall ever complain of having too little or being too small. There will be a contentment. There will be a togetherness. None shall hurt, nor destroy in my holy mountain. What sadly sometimes today disfigures the people of God in the church when brethren cannot dwell together shall not to be the case there. And the wolf and the lamb shall dwell together. And why? Because knowledge of God shall fill everyone as the waters cover the sea. And what knowledge is that? That's not only the knowledge about God, the knowledge of His Person or of His glory, but consider also the knowledge of His law reflected in the devotional love to one another.

And that brings me to my sixth evidence. God's Word defines the final purpose of salvation to be complete holiness. In I Peter 1:15-16, God's saints get the direction, 'Be ye holy as I am holy, in all manner of conversation.' Jesus commands His disciples, "Be ye perfect," not just act perfect, but *be* perfect, in your inner being as we saw in the previous tenth commandment. Well, that is unattainable in this life, but it is not unattainable in the life to come. Why not? Because God promised that He will finally accomplish the full end of the work of salvation.

And what is that? Romans 8 tells us, ‘Those he foreknew he also predestinated to be conformed to the image of God’ (verse 29). The final purpose of God’s restoring work is to restore what there was in Paradise in a perfect conformity [and] reflection to God, and God will so renew His children in the total conformity to the Son of God as seen in Jesus Christ. Again, Ephesians 1:4 supports this when he says, “According as he has chosen us in Christ before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love.” There’s that word *love* again, the devotional reflection of God’s glory.

My last evidence, friends, is that God’s Word records that Jesus is today exalted as the Head of His Church. Paul writes His church “is his body, which the fullness of him filleth all in all” (Ephesians 1:23). The whole church is united to the Head, Jesus Christ. This Head, Who fulfilled the law of God on earth, will He not fulfill it in the heavenly glory? To suggest anything contrary to that is blasphemous. But if He is the Head, will He be united to a body that is also not perfect in the reflection of the glory of God? Shall there be disunity between the Head and the body? Listen to the words of Christ in the prayer of John 17 when He says, “And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also may be sanctified [through] the truth... that they may all be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, and that they also may be one in us” (verses 19 & 21). Can that be perceived without being one in the reflection of the glory of God as seen in the law?

Friends, when arrived in glory, all God’s saints will have reached the perfection the apostle Paul so earnestly longed for when he says, ‘My conversation is in heaven from whence I look and wait. I expect the Lord Jesus Christ who shall change my vile body that it may be fashioned like unto his’ (Philippians 3:20–21). And how will that [be] accomplished? According to the working, His working, whereby He is able to subdue all things unto Himself. And then Paul will never have to say again, “Oh, wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from this body of death?” (Romans 7:24).

Well, these seven evidences support the view that the law of God will abide forever to be the law in the new world. The redeemed in this new world will forever display the truth and the revelation of the beauty of the holiness of God. Heaven begins where sin ends, and sin ends where we are conformed to the image of God, the lawgiver. Grace is glory begun, and glory is grace perfected. Or to say it differently, grace is the lowest degree of glory, and glory is the highest degree of grace.

And that brings us to a close, not only to this lecture but to all of our lectures on the law of God. My prayer has been that these lectures may be used in you as God has used them to me, has increased my admiration and my adoration of God as He has revealed His loveliness, His beauty of holiness in His law. It has also deepened my understanding of the main intent of obedience that God calls us to, [and that] is to love like Him, like Jesus. It has also more than ever convinced me again of how impossible it is for us to be saved by our own doing. We need the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, let me conclude then by directing you to two answers in the Heidelberg Catechism. And the first one is Answer 114 that asks, ‘Can those that are saved keep the commandments of God perfectly?’ The answer is pastoral and biblical. They say, “No, but even the holiest men, while in this life, have only a small beginning of this obedience; yet so, that with a sincere resolution they begin to live, not only according to some, but to all the commandments of God.” That’s a pastoral and a scriptural answer. ‘But why then,’ that’s the next question, ‘must we study the commandments?’ Why must we deepen our knowledge of the law as we’ve done in these last lectures on the law of God and the prior ones leading up to it? Here’s the Answer 115 of the Heidelberg Catechism. The reason to study and to search, even though we can’t keep [them] is that “first, all of our lifetime we may learn more and more to know our sinful nature, and thus become the more earnest in seeking the forgiveness of sin and righteousness in Christ; and likewise, that we constantly [endeavor] and pray to God for the grace of the Holy Spirit, that we may become more and more conformable to the image of God, until we arrive at the perfection proposed to us in the life to come.”

And all I desire to say, friends, on these words of the summary of the teaching on the Heidelberg Catechism and on all the previous teaching of this lecture, is amen and amen. May God bless you.