

The Ten Commandments

In the Bible, the Ten Commandments are given in *Exodus 20:3-17*. They are explained in detail in *Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 305 to 309. Here is this entire passage:

THE FIRST COMMANDMENT

"Thou shalt have no other gods before Me."

The eternal, self-existent, uncreated One, Himself the Source and Sustainer of all, is alone entitled to supreme reverence and worship. Man is forbidden to give to any other object the first place in his affections or his service. Whatever we cherish that tends to lessen our love for God or to interfere with the service due Him, of that we make a god.

THE SECOND COMMANDMENT

"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 is in the water under the earth: thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them."

The Second Commandment forbids the worship of the true God by images or similitudes. Many heathen nations claimed that their images were mere figures or symbols by which the Deity was worshipped, but God has declared such worship to be sin. The attempt to represent the Eternal One by material objects would lower man's conception of God. The mind, turned away from the infinite perfection of the Lord, would be attracted to the creature rather than to the Creator. And as his conceptions of God were lowered, so would man become degraded.

"I the Lord thy God am a jealous God." The close and sacred relation of God to His people is represented under the figure of marriage. Idolatry being spiritual adultery, the displeasure of God against it is fitly called jeal-

ousy.

"Visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate Me." It is inevitable that children should suffer from the consequences of parental wrong-doing, but they are not punished for the parent's guilt, except as they participate in their sins. It is usually the case, however, that children walk in the steps of their parents. By inheritance and example the sons become partakers of the father's sin. Wrong tendencies, perverted appetites, and debased morals, as well as physical disease and degeneracy, are transmitted as a legacy from father to son, to the third and fourth generation. This fearful truth should have a solemn power to restrain men from following a course of sin.

"Showing mercy unto thousands of them that love Me, and keep My Commandments." In prohibiting the worship of false gods, the Second Commandment by implication enjoins the worship of the true God. And to those who are faithful in His service, mercy is promised, not merely to the third and fourth generation as is the wrath threatened against those who hate Him, but to thousands of generations.

THE THIRD COMMANDMENT

"Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain: for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh His name in vain."

This commandment not only forbids false oaths and common swearing, but it forbids us to use the name of God in a light or careless manner, without regard to its awful significance. By the thoughtless mention of God in common conversation, by appeals to Him in trivial matters, and by the frequent and thoughtless repetition of His name, we dishonor Him. "Holy and reverend is His name." *Psalm 111:9*. All should meditate upon His

majesty, His purity and holiness, that the heart may be impressed with a sense of His exalted character; and His holy name should be uttered with reverence and solemnity.

THE FOURTH COMMANDMENT

"Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labor, and do all thy work: but the Seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God: In it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates. For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the Seventh day: wherefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day, and hallowed it."

The Sabbath is not introduced as a new institution but as having been founded at creation. It is to be remembered and observed as the memorial of the Creator's work. Pointing to God as the Maker of the heavens and the earth, it distinguishes the true God from all false gods. All who keep the Seventh day signify by this act that they are worshipers of the Creator-God. Thus the Sabbath is the sign of man's allegiance to God as long as there are any upon the earth to serve Him. The Fourth Commandment is the only one of that shows by whose authority the Ten Commandment Law is given. Thus it contains the Seal of God, affixed to His Law as evidence of its authenticity and binding force.

God has given men six days wherein to labor, and He requires that their own work be done in the six working days. Acts of necessity and mercy are permitted on the Sabbath, the sick and suffering are at all times to be cared for; but unnecessary labor is to be strictly avoided. "Turn away thy foot from the Sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on My holy day; and call the Sabbath a delight, the holy

of the Lord, honorable; and honor Him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure. Isaiah 58:13. Nor does the prohibition end here. "Nor speaking thine own words," says the prophet Those who discuss business matters or lay plans on the Sabbath are regarded by God as though engaged in the actual transaction of business.

To keep the Sabbath holy, we should not even allow our minds to dwell upon things of a worldly character. And the commandment includes all within our gates. The inmates of the house are to lay aside their worldly business during the sacred hours. All should unite to honor God by willing service upon His holy day.

THE FIFTH COMMANDMENT

"Honor thy father and thy mother, that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord giveth thee."

Parents are entitled to a degree of love and respect which is due to no other person. God Himself, who has placed upon them a responsibility for the souls committed to their charge, has ordained that during the earliest years of life, parents shall stand in the place of God. The Fifth Commandment requires children not only to yield respect, submission, and obedience to their parents, but also to give them love and tenderness, to lighten their cares, to guard their reputation, and to succor and comfort them in old age. It also enjoins respect for ministers and rulers and for all others to whom God has delegated authority.

This, says the apostle, "Is the first commandment with promise."

Ephesians 6:2.

THE SIXTH COMMANDMENT

"Thou shalt not kill."

All acts of injustice that tend to shorten life; the spirit of hatred and revenge, or the indulgence of any passion that leads to injurious acts towards others, or causes us even to wish them harm (for "whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer"); a selfish neglect of caring for the needy or suffering; all self-indulgence, or unnecessary deprivation or excessive labor that tends to injure health—all these are, to a greater or less degree, violations of the Sixth Commandment.

THE SEVENTH COMMANDMENT

"Thou shalt not commit adultery."

This commandment forbids not only acts of impurity, but sensual thought and desires, or any practice that tends to excite them. Purity is demanded not only in the outward life but in the secret intents and emotions of the heart. Christ, who taught the far-reaching obligation of the Law of God, declared the evil thought or look to be as truly sin as is the unlawful deed.

THE EIGHTH COMMANDMENT

"Thou shalt not steal."

Both public and private sins are included in this prohibition. The Eighth Commandment condemns manstealing and slave dealing, and forbids wars of conquest. It condemns theft and robbery. It demands strict integrity in the minutest details of the affairs of life. It forbids overreaching in trade, and requires the payment of

just debts or wages. It declares that every attempt to advantage oneself by the ignorance, weakness, or misfortune of another is registered as fraud in the books of heaven.

THE NINTH COMMANDMENT

"Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor."

False speaking in any matter, every attempt or purpose to deceive our neighbor, is here included. An intention to deceive is what constitutes falsehood. By a glance of the eye, a motion of the hand, an expression of the countenance, a falsehood may be told as effectually as by words. All intentional overstatement, every hint or insinuation calculated to convey an erroneous or exaggerated impression, even the statement of facts in such a manner as to mislead, is falsehood. This precept forbids every effort to injure our neighbor's reputation by misrepresentation or evil surmising, by slander or tale bearing. Even the intentional suppression of truth, by which injury may result to others, is a violation of the Ninth Commandment.

THE TENTH COMMANDMENT

"Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's wife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor anything that is thy neighbor's"

The Tenth Commandment strikes at the very root of all sins, prohibiting the selfish desire, from which springs the sinful desire for that which belongs to another will not be guilty of an act of wrong toward his fellow creatures.

"If a man love Me, he will keep My words; and My Father will love him, and We will come unto him, and make Our abode with him."

—John 14:23

THE LAW OF GOD

I

Thou shalt have no other gods before Me.

II

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 is in the water under the earth: Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate Me; and showing mercy unto the thousands of them that love Me, and keep My commandments.

III

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.

IV

Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labor, and do all thy work; but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God. In it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates. For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day, and hallowed it.

V

Honor thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee.

VI

Thou shalt not kill.

VII

Thou shalt not commit adultery.

VIII

Thou shalt not steal.

IX

Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor.

X

Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's house; thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's wife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor anything that is thy neighbor's.

—Exodus 20:3-17

THE LAW OF GOD AS CHANGED BY MAN

I

I am the Lord thy God. Thou shalt not have strange gods before Me.

[The Second Commandment has been left out.]

II [actually III]

Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain.

III [actually IV]

Remember that thou keep holy the Sabbath day.
[The Sabbath Commandment has been changed.]

IV [actually V]

Honor thy father and thy mother.

V [actually VI]

Thou shalt not kill.

VI [actually VII]

Thou shalt not commit adultery.

VII (actually VIII)

Thou shalt not steal.

VIII [actually IX - First Part]

Thou shalt not covert thy neighbor's wife.

X [X - Second Part]

Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's goods.

—*The General Catholic Catechism*

“Q.—Have you any other way of proving that the [Catholic] Church has power to institute festivals of precept?”

“A.—Had she not such power . . . she could not have substituted the observance of Sunday, the first day of the week for Saturday, the seventh day, a change for which there is no scriptural authority.”—*Doctrinal Catechism*, p. 174 [Roman Catholic].

“Prove to me from the Bible alone that I am bound to keep Sunday holy. There is no such law in the Bible. It is a law of the holy Catholic Church alone. The Bible says ‘Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy.’ The Catholic Church says, No. By my divine power I abolish the Sabbath day and command you to keep holy the first day of the week. And lo! The entire civilized world bows down in reverent obedience to the command of the Holy Roman Catholic Church.”—*Thomas Enright, CSSR, President, Redemptorist College, Kansas City, Missouri, February 18, 1884* [Roman Catholic].

THE LAW OF GOD IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

I

“Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve.”—*Matthew 4:10.*

II

“Little children, keep yourselves from idols.” “Forasmuch then as we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man’s devices.”—*1 John 5:21; Acts 17:29.*

III

“That the name of God and His doctrine be not blasphemed.”
—*1 Timothy 6:1.*

IV

“Pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the Sabbath day.” “The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath: therefore the Son of man is Lord also of the Sabbath.” “For He spake in the certain place of the seventh day on this wise, And God did rest the seventh day from all His works.” “There remaineth therefore a keeping of a Sabbath to the people of God. For he that is entered into His rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from His.” “For by Him were all things created that are in heaven, and that are in earth.”—*Matthew 24:20; Mark 2:27-28; Hebrews 4:4, 9, 10; Colossians 1:16.*

V

“Honor thy father and thy mother.”—*Matthew 19:19.*

VI

“Thou shalt not kill.”—*Romans 13:9.*

VII

“Thou shalt not commit adultery.”—*Matthew 19:18.*

VIII

“Thou shalt not steal.”—*Romans 13:9.*

IX

“Thou shalt not bear false witness.”—*Romans 13:9.*

X

“Thou shalt not covet.”—*Romans 7:7.*

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