

Biblical Theology by Dr. Chuck Baynard

Lesson 31 (HCLD 34)¹

Preparation: Begin and end each study time with prayer. Pay particular attention to the background reading and pray over each passage asking God to reveal Himself to you.

Background Reading: Read all the Scripture verses in footnote # 1 & 2.

Question: What special things are we to consider in the Ten Commandments?

Answer: We are to consider, in the ten commandments, the preface, the substance of the commandments themselves, and several reasons annexed to some of them, the more to enforce them.

The attempt here I think is to get us to realize that the shortened versions of the commandments man has always been prone to put forward do not even begin to portray what God intended in giving these ten commandments to us. In the preface for example we find God declares Himself their God, and reminds them He is worthy of that place even without benefit of His deity, for He is the God who brought them out of slavery.

¹ The Heidelberg Catechism, Lord's Day 34

Q93: How are these Commandments divided?

A93: Into two tables:[1] the first of which teaches, in four commandments, what duties we owe to God; the second, in six, what duties we owe to our neighbor.[2]

1. Exod. 34:28; Deut. 4:13
2. Matt. 22:37-40

Q94: What does God require in the first Commandment?

A94: That, on peril of my soul's salvation, I avoid and flee all idolatry,[1] sorcery, enchantments,[2] invocation of saints or of other creatures,[3] and that I rightly acknowledge the only true God,[4] trust in Him alone,[5] with all humility [6] and patience [7] expect all good from Him only,[8] and love,[9] fear [10] and honor [11] Him with my whole heart; so as rather to renounce all creatures than to do the least thing against His will.[12]

1. I Cor. 10:7, 14
2. Lev. 19:31; Deut. 18:10-12
3. Matt. 4:10; Rev. 19:10; 22:8-9
4. John 17:3
5. Jer. 17:5
6. I Peter 5:5-6
7. Heb. 10:36; Col. 1:10b-11; Rom. 5:3-4; I Cor. 10:10
8. Psa. 104:27-30; Isa. 45:6b-7; James 1:17
9. Deut. 6:5
10. Deut. 6:2; Psa. 111:10; Prov. 9:10; Matt. 10:28
11. Deut. 10:20
12. Matt. 5:29-30; 10:37; Acts 5:29

Q95: What is idolatry?

A95: Idolatry is to conceive or have something else in which to place our trust instead of, or besides, the one true God who has revealed Himself in His Word.[1]

1. Eph. 2:12; 5:5; Phil. 3:19; John 2:23; 5:23; II John 1:9; Psa. 62:5-7; 73:25-26; 81:8-9; Matt. 6:24

From the time of the creation God has always provided all that He ever required of man, before He asked for it to be given to Him. As if Adam could not have looked to God as his God and worthy of his worship from the act of creation only, God first created everything else that all would be in place before He created man. Not only so, God so ordered things that there was even in the perfection of His new creation prior to the entrance of sin, a special place for man, for God Himself planted a garden for man to live in. It is this continuous provision of God before man needed it, that could lead Paul under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit to point out in Romans twelve it is only reasonable for us to offer our bodies as a living sacrifice to God. This truth we find from the first words of the Scriptures, long before sin appeared in history and the death of Christ for that sin was required, and then provided, not of man but by God.

In a short aside here I would like to say that those who would have the fall of Satan occur between verses one and two of Genesis one are sorely mistaken. There is no break in the creation narrative at this point, and after each day of creation God said it was good. If Satan (evil) was present, it could not be so. Pure speculation on my part, but I would place the fall of Satan shortly after the creation of woman and the command to not eat of the tree of knowledge. I believe it was the creation of man in the image of God that brought out the sinful nature of Satan in jealousy over this creation of God. Not having been privy to the counsel of God, he along with the rest of the heavenly host could only stand in awe and wonder as God brought forth the universe. Seeing man created in the image of God, and in that way superior to the host of heaven from the beginning caused the father of evil to attempt his overthrow of the most high. It was thus after the creation he was cast from heaven, though for a season (until the death of Christ) he appears to have had access to the heavenly court, that was not his place of abode.

It is things of this nature we should see and think of as we read and study the law. There is so much more here than the mere words we find in the English Bible we love so dearly. God calls to mind all of His faithfulness, longsuffering and everlasting mercy, and love toward us. It is this I think the Westminster Divines were trying to convey here. Sadly this has no parallel in the rest of the standards, nor do we find references provided by the Westminster Divines for this question. Several verses from the Psalms come to mind, but I will leave it where the Westminster Divines chose, and to the Spirit and the conscience of the individual to see the truth herein laid before us in how to properly understand the commandments especially, but I believe beyond the shadow of doubt all of Scripture should be thus considered.

Naturally one would think that we should consider the substance of the commandment. Yet, in truth do we consider the substance when we do not get past the most casual reading of the meat of the commandment without further thought to the opposite that is just as equally implied, or how this will have an affect in all that we say or do, from the most casual of conversations to the greatest of deeds? We all stand guilty of prostituting the Word of God so to speak by attempting to condense for the sake of space the ten into two neat tables for printed purposes. Two panels of the law mounted on the front of the church so they appear to be two stained glass windows grace our present church. The window treatment of the panels was a great addition to our church building, which is without windows. However as I recently stood and read these two panels for the hundredth time it dawned on me that we too were guilty of trying to capture the essence of the commandments by placing on public display what we considered to be the substance of the law. What I had dreamed of for several years and had taken such pride in when this project was completed, suddenly seemed such a sad presentation of God's eternal truth. We cannot separate the essence of the law from the whole of God's Word in such a manner. Thus we add substance to the preface, not separate or concentrate on the substance, we begin to feel the life that comes from the whole revelation of the law as it brings to mind not only what sin is, but how pitiful our efforts to condense or set aside any single word of the law, or deny the principles of implication as many are want to do.

How gracious of our God to annex reasons for obedience to some of the commandments. He who with all the authority of the Creator over the created, did not give us a list of negative sanctions, but rather attached promises to some, and reasons to others, that we might see then that which was not intended to bring life, but reveal sin as a further revelation of His love and grace toward His elect. God who owes no creature, much less man an explanation for any of His actions, gives us reasons why we should obey the law. Which monarch among men has ever stopped to explain their actions to even their peers much less

those inferior in position to their own? Yet the God of all, that our sin-darkened minds might be drawn to Him, so took of His time to offer reasons within the law. Can any even in the most casual reading of the law then not fall prostrate before the great God of creation and cry out with the psalmist, what is man that thou art mindful of him? And the son of man, that thou visiteth him? For thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honor (Ps. 8:4-5). (It is this line of thought that bought me to my belief concerning the timing of the fall of Satan.) Read all of Psalm eight and see how pitiful a lot we as men are when we can so lightly consider God's Word, which reveals to even the darkest of minds, and ignorant among men, the great love and mercy of God in the giving of His Law/Word for our edification and salvation.

The Westminster Divine's statement that this is of God to more enforce the ten commandments I believe is more toward the mind and conscience of the pious than of a further sanction in disobedience of them. How can any so easily turn their back on the Father of love? This is more repugnant to the pious mind than the proverbial dog turning to bite the hand of the one that feeds him. Out of awe and respect for the God of creation we should leave no stone unturned in an attempt to obey His every Word. When considered in the gracious and loving nature and that for our own good, even the most immoral surely would fall prostrate in shame before the King of the Earth for such disregard of His loving Law. Yet along with this sinful child, how lightly we are wont to take of the ten commandments, as if they were merely ten suggestions, and those not of a peer but a lesser. How the mercy of God is magnified in His righteous Law!

Suggested Sermon Outline

The Law of God

What is the Law of God?

God spake all these words, saying,

What rules are to be observed for the right understanding of the ten commandments? Exodus 20

For the right understanding of the ten commandments, these rules are to be observed:

1. That the law is perfect, and binds everyone to full conformity in the whole man unto the righteousness thereof, and unto entire obedience forever; so as to require the utmost perfection of every duty, and to forbid the least degree of every sin.

The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple. (PSALM 19:7)

Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment: **But I say unto you**, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment: and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire. (MATTHEW 5:21-22)

For **whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all**. (JAMES 2:10)

2. That it is spiritual, and so reaches the understanding, will, affections, and all other powers of the soul; as well as words, works, and gestures.

For we know that **the law is spiritual**: but I am carnal, sold under sin. (ROMANS 7:14)

And thou shalt **love the LORD thy God with all** thine **heart**, and with all thy **soul**, and with all thy **might**. (DEUTERONOMY 6:5)

Jesus said unto him, **Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.** This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, **Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.** (MATTHEW 22:37-39)

3. That one and the same thing, in divers respects, is required or forbidden in several commandments.

Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and **covetousness, which is idolatry.** (COLOSSIANS 3:5)

Saying, When will the new moon be gone, that we may sell corn? and the sabbath, that we may set forth wheat, **making the ephah small, and the shekel great,** and falsifying the balances by deceit? (AMOS 8:5)

So are the ways of **every one that is greedy** of gain; which **taketh away the life of the owners thereof.** (PROVERBS 1:19)

For the **love of money is the root of all evil:** which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows. (1 TIMOTHY 6:10)

4. That as, where a duty is commanded, the contrary sin is forbidden; and, where a sin is forbidden, the contrary duty is commanded: so, where a promise is annexed, the contrary threatening is included; and, where a threatening is annexed, the contrary promise is included.

If thou **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, honourable; and shalt **honour him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure,** nor speaking thine own words: (ISAIAH 58:13)

Thou shalt **fear the LORD** thy God, **and serve him,** and shalt swear by his name. (Deuteronomy 6:13)

And saith unto him, **All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me.** Then saith Jesus unto him, Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, **Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.** (MATTHEW 4:9-10)

For God commanded, saying, Honour thy father and mother: and, He that curseth father or mother, let him die the death. But ye say, Whosoever shall say to his father or his mother, It is a gift, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me; And honour not his father or his mother, he shall be free. **Thus have ye made the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition.** (MATTHEW 15:4-6)

Let him that stole steal no more: but rather **let him labour,** working with his hands the thing which is good, **that he may have to give to him that needeth.** (EPHESIANS 4:28)

Honour thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee. (EXODUS 20:12)

The eye that mocketh at his father, and despiseth to obey his mother, **the ravens of the valley shall pick it out,** and the young eagles shall eat it. (PROVERBS 30:17)

At what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up, and to pull down, and to destroy it; If that nation, against whom I have pronounced, turn from their evil, **I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them.** (JEREMIAH 18:7-8)

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)

In whose eyes a vile person is contemned; but he honoureth them that fear the LORD. **He that sweareth to his own hurt, and changeth not.** He that putteth not out his money to usury, nor taketh reward against the innocent. **He that doeth these things shall never be moved.** (PSALM 15:4-5)

He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart; who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully. He shall receive the blessing from the LORD, and righteousness from the God of his salvation. (PSALM 24:4-5)

5. That what God forbids, is at no time to be done; what he commands, is always our duty; and yet every particular duty is not to be done at all times.

And not rather, (as we be slanderously reported, and as some affirm that we say,) **Let us do evil, that good may come?** whose damnation is just. (ROMANS 3:8)

Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, **than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season;** (HEBREWS 11:25)

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? Only **take heed to thyself, and keep thy soul diligently, lest thou forget the things which thine eyes have seen, and lest they depart from thy heart** all the days of thy life: but **teach them thy sons, and thy sons' sons;** (DEUTERONOMY 4:8-9)

But if ye had known what this meaneth, **I will have mercy, and not sacrifice, ye would not have condemned the guiltless.** (MATTHEW 12:7)

6. That under one sin or duty, all of the same kind are forbidden or commanded; together with all the causes, means, occasions, and appearances thereof, and provocations thereunto.

Abstain from all appearance of evil. (1 THESSALONIANS 5:22)

And **others save with fear,** pulling them out of the fire; **hating even the garment spotted by the flesh.** (JUDE 23)

Fathers, **provoke not your children** to anger, **lest they be discouraged.** (COLOSSIANS 3:21)

7. That what is forbidden or commanded to ourselves, we are bound, according to our places, to endeavor that it may be avoided or performed by others, according to the duty of their places.

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: (EXODUS 20:10)

Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thine heart: thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy neighbour, **and not suffer sin upon him.** (LEVITICUS 19:17)

For I know him, that **he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the LORD,** to do justice and judgment; that the LORD may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him. (GENESIS 18:19)

And if it seem evil unto you to serve the LORD, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but **as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD.** (JOSHUA 24:15)

And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: And thou shalt **teach them diligently unto thy children,** and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. (DEUTERONOMY 6:6-7)

8. That in what is commanded to others, we are bound, according to our places and callings, to be helpful to them; and to take heed of partaking with others in what is forbidden them.

Not for that we have dominion over your faith, but are helpers of your joy: for by faith ye stand. (2 CORINTHIANS 1:24)

Lay hands suddenly on no man, **neither be partaker of other men's sins:** keep thyself pure. (1 TIMOTHY 5:22)

And **have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness,** but rather **reprove them.** (EPHESIANS 5:11)