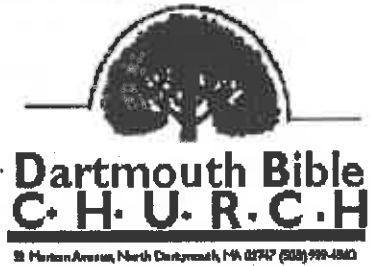


DARTMOUTH BIBLE NOTES

FROM THE TEACHING MINISTRIES OF
DARTMOUTH BIBLE CHURCH



Series: The Ten Commandments
Scripture: Matthew 22:34-40

Neil C. Damgaard, Th.M.
Lesson 1 August 1st, 1993

The Great and Foremost Commandment

Introduction Sometimes it's hard to know who the *real* Red Sox fans are. There are lots of people who have Red Sox bumper stickers on their cars; who maybe go to a game or two; who get excited when Roger Clemens wins a game, and so forth. But when the Sox have dropped three or four games in a row, or when they've lost 6 out of 8, let's say--that's when you find out who the real fans are and who the fair weather fans are. In the Christian life, there is a parallel. In the Christian life you can tell who the real disciples of Jesus are, by their true character. True character comes out NOT when everything is wonderful and you're full of joy, but when times are tough. True character comes out when you're stressed out and when it *isn't* convenient to make a decision to follow Jesus. And at times like that, you can tell who is *really* a disciple of Jesus by what comes out of their lives *during* that time of difficulty.

The passage today gives us a true bench mark of character. Jesus found Himself with some frequency in conversations with Jewish leaders. In Matthew 22 Jesus is sort of cornered by a group of scholars called Sadducees. And then after He finished the conversation with the Sadducees, up walk the Pharisees and one of them, a lawyer, tries to outsmart Jesus with a "trick" question. Jesus' response to this question is what we want to think about today.

The Political Incorrectness of the Ten Commandments Before we start talking about Jesus' words in Matthew 22, though, have you sensed how politically *incorrect* it is becoming to suggest that the Ten Commandments are still valid? First of all, I really doubt if most Americans (especially young ones) could *quote* them. And probably most adults have, at best, only a vague recollection, "Oh, yeah, something about *Thou shalt not* this or that...*name in vain...adultery...coveting...*

This week on a local radio talk show I heard a young man call in and whine to the host that his priest wouldn't marry him and his girlfriend in the church, because they're living together. He (the man) was outraged and said, "No wonder they're losing young people from the church--they won't let us live

together and still be married in the church." This was telling--not only because of the attitude of disregard for something that basically is not a "church" issue, but is a Ten Commandments type issue--it was telling because of the talk show hostess's audacity in agreeing with the man and blasting the priest for his narrow-minded stand on people living together. This is where many people are today. They have forgotten WHO invented the commandments, why they're there and even what they are.

We are going to look at them, one by one in the coming weeks, and we are going to look at them from a New Testament perspective. You see, the New Testament *did* something to the Ten Commandments. Jesus did something to the whole meaning of the commandments. We're going to discover what that was, and today we begin by looking at "the bottom line." This is where you can tell what kind of character a person has--when things are tough, are they falling back on these words of Jesus, or do they fall back and do just what feels good?

The Attorney's Question Now in verse 36, the Pharisee attorney's question is typical of the way a Pharisee would think. They loved to carry on lengthy debates about the commandments, arguing whether any particular one was great or small, powerfully important or less important. In the Old Testament there are not just the first Ten Commandments--there are a total of 613 commandments from God to Israel, 248 of them are positive and 365 are negative. And so this particular fellow asked Jesus the quintessential Pharisaical question, *which is the great commandment in the Law?* Or another translation of the Greek here would give it *what sort of commandment is great in the Law?* (What kind of commandment do you consider weighty, Jesus?) [Dr. Dan Wallace, *Greek Grammar Notes*, 1980, DTS, p. 119).

The Answer Jesus Gave Jesus *did* focus in on one commandment. It wasn't one of the "Ten", either, but it comes from the great *Shema* in Deuteronomy 6:5. The whole duty of man, as Jesus sums it up, is in one word: *love*. When you look at the Ten Commandments, the first four deal with loving God and the last six deal with loving man. When you are pushed to the wall; when you are stressed out; when the Christian "game" just isn't satisfying any more, what are you reduced to? That's when our character is truly revealed. Do you love God and are you loving your neighbor?

The greatest commandment is to love God... The greatest challenge any Christian can face, I think, is the kind of treatment and persecution believers received under Communism and Naziism before that. The world is changing so fast it seems, but I hope we do not forget the stories of how believers have withstood persecution. In the late '60's a Romanian pastor (Lutheran, I think) named Richard Wurmbrand published a book (after fourteen years in prison) called *Tortured For Christ*. It is not the sort of snappy, people-pleasing book that would sell today,

maybe. But it is a great book because it tells many stories oh how believers react--how they choose to love God even if it would cost them their lives.

"Westerners have probably heard about the brainwashing in the Korean war and now in Vietnam, I have passed through brainwashing myself. It is the most horrible torture. For years we had to sit for seventeen hours a day hearing, 'Communism is good! Communism is good! Communism is good! Communism is good! Christianity is stupid! Christianity is stupid! Christianity is stupid! Give up! Give up! Give up! Give up!' For seventeen hours a day--for days, weeks and months. Several Christians have asked me how we could resist brainwashing. There is only one method of resistance to brainwashing. This is 'heartwashing'. If the heart is cleansed by the love of Jesus Christ, and if the [your] heart loves Him, you can resist all tortures. What would a loving bride not do for a loving bridegroom? What would a loving mother not do for her child?" (p.40)

Dear ones, it costs us so little today to love God. We can make decisions about pleasing Him with so little expense. At the moment at least, our lives are not in danger for the privilege of loving Him. People say quite a bit today, "I want some meaning in my life. I might just go *back* to the church, if I thought there was some meaning and direction there." Well, God has not changed. He has given us all kinds of direction and guidance--when you're faced with a decision, love God. When you're faced with the temptation to give in to the flesh, to what feels good, love God. When you are weary, turn to Him and tell Him, "Lord, I want to love You and do what pleases You--You will have to help me to love You."

Great Commandment #2 In verse 39 Jesus tacked on Great Commandment #2, which comes from Leviticus 19:18, *You shall love your neighbor as yourself*. Now, how much do I love myself? Pretty much. Watch out for him, provide for him, defer to him with at least the same care you give to yourself. You know, there is nothing so contradicting of the faith as selfishness. So, what is your character like? It becomes evident when things get hard in the Christian life. When its not convenient to keep up the appearance of the Christian life, then a person will consciously either decide *still* to love God and his neighbor or he will fall back on the flesh.

The true disciples of Jesus demonstrate it when the pressure is on in their lives. And the Ten Commandments come down basically to "do I love God or do I love myself? Who is more important?"

We are going to look at the commandments again--for some of you it may be the first time, really...or the first time in a long time that you have seriously considered them. Let's be in prayer that this will be a great time in your life and that you really get a vision of the heart of God.

DARTMOUTH BIBLE NOTES

FROM THE TEACHING MINISTRIES OF
DARTMOUTH BIBLE CHURCH



Series: The Ten Commandments
Scripture: Exodus 20:1-17

Neil C. Damgaard, Th.M.
Lesson 2 August 8th, 1993

Ten Commandments Basics

Introduction It's always good to learn the "basics" of something before you get into the specifics--whether we're talking about tennis, or computer programming, or sailing or cooking. Getting a fundamental understanding of the subject *first*, is the wise way to learn about something, don't you think? Well, the basics about the living God can be summed up maybe like this:

There is only one of Him;
He is holy,
He wants to be loved and obeyed,
He rewards they who seek Him with love and mercy.

The Ten Commandments need to be understood in light of *who God really is*. You and I cannot understand what these Ten Commandments are really all about if the picture we have of God in our minds is not accurate. It's important that as we study them together, for us to keep Jesus Christ in mind. He is the only one who ever kept all ten and all the time. He understood the heart of God, and all the many implications for the commandments. He understood the way that men can *twist* what the commandments were supposed to mean for day to day life and He did not hesitate to confront those distortions when someone would throw one at Him. We need to keep the life of Jesus and His words clearly in mind as we seek to understand the commandments that Jehovah gave to Moses, either 1,440 or 1,290 B.C. I'm not sure it makes much difference. The fact is, it happened.

Where and When it Was... It was right after Moses led Israel out of Egypt. The people have arrived in the Sinai, at the foot of what the Book of Exodus (19:11) calls "Mount Sinai." Up on the mountain, God gave the Ten Commandments to Moses as the people waited. And then later, God had to give them *again* to Moses because when Moses had come down the first time the people had given in to a wild urge to orgy and, well, you know the story. It's all right there in Exodus 32...

Now, before I give you some basic facts about the Ten Commandments, let's consider something the Apostle Paul wrote: turn to that great chapter in the New Testament-- Romans 8 and let's read from verse 1...

In Christ, a person is set free from God's condemnation because Jesus has already suffered that condemnation for that person. Is that clear? And so, the Law of Moses--the *mechanism* for pointing out why condemnation is deserved, is of no threat to the person who is in Christ--who has invited Jesus to be HIS personal sin-bearer.

If you are walking by the Spirit, the Law of Moses will not be something you dread. But if you're living by the flesh, then the Law is always going to seem like this big condemning thing. The reason is that the Ten Commandments point out how the flesh is in failure; how "our way" only brings moral decline and deterioration in folks' lives.

This week *Focus on the Family* had a Pastor's "round table" discussion about how pastors need to stand up publicly for what is right and not get too upset if the general public, or even people in the pews, don't approve. We *all* need to do this, I think, not only the pastors. Dear ones, there IS such a thing as right and wrong. Some practices that people choose to do, are wrong, That's all there is too it. And some choices are righteous and good. Let's not get too confused by all the rhetoric we hear about how this lifestyle and that one are just *naturally* enacted. People DO make choices. And sometimes--in fact, in my view *often*--they are in plain disobedience to what God wants and demands of people.

CH1

Now as we go "back to Mount Sinai," you need to see a couple of things. First, God Himself spoke them on Mount Sinai. That seems far-fetched for some today to believe. It is sort of an under-current in today's thinking that ,

10 Commandments Assumptions

"Nah, God didn't *really* say those things. He couldn't have *really* spoke them Himself to Moses personally and directly..."

Why not?

"Because He wouldn't do that."

Why not?

"Because that's not the way I believe God is."

Well, who is God, then?

"I imagine Him to be _____ and _____ and..."

But where we are coming from is to believe that God is just as the Scripture says He is and was and shall be. We take the record of Moses and David and Isaiah and Matthew and Paul to be accurate and reliable. That means that God Himself spoke these commandments to Moses, just as Moses wrote it down that He did.

Second, the commandments needed to be written down. You see, the Bible teaches that folks *do really know* what is truly right and wrong in their hearts. It was written in folks' hearts from the beginning, by virtue of their being created in the image of God. But sin has SO DEFACED the knowledge of God in people that His Law needed to be written down on paper (or in the original case, on stone tablets) to revive what had become obscured and forgotten by sin. Now let's consider some basics about the commandments:

1. The Ten Commandments reveal the heart of God.
2. They were for good and for good only.
3. They were never intended to be the basis of being saved.
4. They drive us to the cross of Jesus Christ.
5. They are timeless.
6. They are absolute; not being subject to man's ratification.
7. They will anger some today who have given themselves to the flesh.
8. They were fulfilled by Christ personally.
9. They were superseded and enhanced by the "law of Christ".

My purpose in getting us started at looking at the Commandments is that I believe it is *always* appropriate to look at the heart of God, and to discover and rediscover and rediscover again what is important to Him.

I hope you will find some *re-calibration* for yourself in them.

I hope you will be driven to Christ because they show you again (or for the first time, your utter hopelessness without Him).

I hope you will learn them and know them.

I hope you will be equipped to tell other people why they need a Savior.

I hope you will find joy in choosing to live according to the Law of Christ and that your life will grow in holiness; and I pray to that end, too.

Ten Commandments

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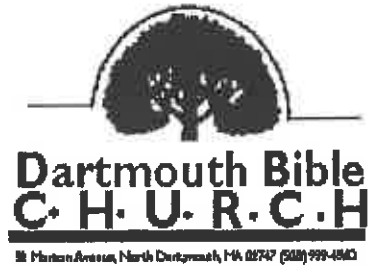
- 1. Yhwh Himself
spoke them**
- 2. They *needed*
to be written
down**

Ten Commandments BASICS:

1. the heart of God
2. for good and good only
3. *never* intended to be the basis
of salvation
4. drive us to the cross
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7. will anger people in the flesh
8. fulfilled by Christ personally
9. superseded and enhanced by
Jesus Christ

DARTMOUTH BIBLE NOTES

FROM THE TEACHING MINISTRIES OF
DARTMOUTH BIBLE CHURCH



Series: The Ten Commandments
Scripture: Exodus 34:1-9

Neil C. Damgaard, Th.M.
Lesson 3 August 15th, 1993

The First Commandment

Introduction One of the great *distortions* of the Christian faith is *legalistic* Christianity. You are not a Christian for very long before one of two things starts to happen: you either start to *become* legalistic yourself, or you run into another Christian who warns you about it and you begin to guard against it. The spirit of legalism is something we try very hard to avoid in the Christian life. But it is harder to come up with a definition of legalism than you might think. Dr. Ryrie wrote this: "Legalism is more often talked about than defined, and when it is defined it is sometimes done to justify the practice of the one defining it and condemn the conduct of others!" (*Balancing the Christian Life* p. 159). Ryrie says legalism is a "fleshly [or wrong] attitude which conforms to a code for the purpose of exalting self" (*Hey--look at me. See how well I keep the rules?*) You will agree with me, I think, that legalism is something we want to keep *out* of our Christianity at all costs, because it is actually a complete contradiction of the Gospel of grace, which says that no person CAN be saved by keeping rules and that salvation from sin can *only* be had by receiving it as a FREE GIFT from God in the person of His Son, Jesus Christ. Any mixing in of *Hey-look-at-me:I-don't-do-this-or-that-and-I-do-do-this-and-that* is something that should be repugnant to us.

But it isn't *legalistic* to have to do something. And as Christians, we are obligated to keep the ten commandments. We recognize that we are incapable of perfect obedience because we recognize that we are still sinners, laboring in a war between our OLD selves and our NEW selves. The apostle Paul acknowledged that in his own life (Romans 7). But as Christians, if we find that we *have to do something*, dear ones that is not legalism--just if we get a wrong attitude toward doing it and we start to think, "aren't I great since I'm doing it?" As Christians we are obligated to obey God in all things He says to us.

And so we come to the first commandment. You are I are obligated to keep it. We know we *can't* keep it perfectly, and we know that sometimes we probably *will* allow some other thing to dethrone the Lord from our hearts. But still we MUST keep it. God has commanded it to Moses, to Israel and to you and me. As someone

a few years ago pointed out, these were not the "10 suggestions" when Jehovah gave them Himself to Moses and they are not the "10 suggestions" today either. They are the 10 commandments. That means they are commands. We have to do them. If we choose *not* to do them we are in open rebellion; sin. And that is that.

The Commandment Itself In Exodus 20:3 Moses recorded the first of the ten. *You shall have no other gods before Me.* Literally the commandment reads in Hebrew, *There shall not be to you other gods against My face.* You, Israel, shall not imagine that there *are* other gods and then bring them between you and Me and make them a bigger priority to you than I am. This commandment--basically a belief in ONE God--set the Israelite religion apart from all other ancient near east religions. No other ancient law code has been found that prohibits worship of other gods.

It is interesting to me that the first commandment is not a prohibition of atheism. One *might* think that atheism is the greatest thing that God would need to prohibit. It is not--even though it is popular (or *hip*) in this century for some people to claim it. God had no need to prohibit atheism because atheism is basically an irrational viewpoint. The most evil being in the universe is no atheist; he knows full well the existence of the one true God. But creatively making up *other* deities, or taking any form of fleshly pleasure or pursuit and making THAT into something to be completely devoted to, THAT is something God said, "Don't do it."

The commandment itself, was for Israel to trust, to depend upon, to love, to obey, to seek, to honor and to serve the one true God, Jehovah. It is the same for us, except we know now from the N.T., that the one true God is not only one essence but also three Persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. And so we worship the one true God as a "triune" one and true God. Today, just as 3,400 years ago in the Sinai, God demands complete *and exclusive* religious acknowledgment of Himself. We get restatements of this first and foremost command of God to His people all through the Bible, both Old and New Testaments. But let's look at Exodus 34:14. There we read *Do not worship any other god, for the Lord, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God.* The word in Hebrew for this name that God takes to Himself, is *Qanna'*. It means *ZEAL FOR ONE'S OWN PROPERTY*. I think this throws some people because they somehow think God is not allowed to strong emotions about anything, including His rights as God. But in reality, God says, *I am a jealous God* whether we like it or not. He *DOES* have very strong feelings about things. He never has evil or wicked feelings, only holy and pure. But part of His holiness and purity is His absolute satisfaction with Himself. We depend on that dear ones, because we are banking on when God the Father looks at us as Christians and sees the blood of His Son, He is fully satisfied. And He *IS* fully satisfied with Himself. And part of who He is, is a God who loves His people. And therefore God expects for man to return His love. He absolutely demands that we *disallow* any OTHER

"god" -- no matter how attractive the world may conjure up one for us -- from coming between us and Himself.

I want to probe at something here that is peculiar to our society. We are quite fascinated with science fiction. I like it myself. But most science fiction that I have seen becomes for people science *fantasy*. They find something satisfying about imagining a galaxy *full* of beings higher than us, more benevolent than us, and in fact rivaling the God of the Bible. In fact, I imagine that about 99% of science fiction out there has no room at all for the one true God. And we love it. Now lest you say "Now, there you go taking it all so seriously"--dear ones, I have no choice but to take the behavior trends and habits of people seriously. I'm sure Aaron *could* have said to Moses when he came back down from the mountain, "Now Moses, we've got this little calf over here, but don't be taking it so seriously. It's just science fiction after all." What is it about *reality* that makes science *fiction* or *fantasy* more satisfying?

Well, we need to know, first of all, and then to remember that God termed Himself *Qanna'* and God's nature and character do not change. You and I need to obey this commandment strictly. We do not go around bragging, *Hey, I only worshipped Jehovah today, how about you?* No, Jesus told us the second greatest commandment is to love each other as we love ourselves--I, for one, don't like folks comparing me with them, so I'm not going to do it to them.

Other Applications and Implications of the Commandment Back in Exodus 34 God also told Israel that not only were they to not have any other gods, but to not get too close to those who *did* worship other gods. It can't be stressed too strongly, dear ones, the seductive power of unbelievers. They invite us to stuff and before you know it our minds are saying to us, *Hey this isn't so bad*. It is not that we're supposed to isolate ourselves from unbelievers at all and be all uptight around them. But we are JEHOVAH-WORSHIPPERS. We are CHRIST-FOLLOWERS. We are the people who place God *first* in our lives. And if we are called upon or tempted to abandon that, we need to say "No". If it costs us then let it cost us.

Maybe the first thing a new Christian needs to learn about God, after they truly come to trust in the cross, is that now God expects us to put Him first. He knows we will fail at this and He isn't going to blast us. As the passage we first read this morning says, *The Lord, the Lord, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin...* He is incredibly kind and loving and caring and patient. We are going to fail Him, even rebel against Him and He is going to be longsuffering with that. But make no mistake about it, His love does not *diminish* His demand to be first in a believer's life--not second or third or twelfth, when I get around to Him or bother to remember Him.

He expects you and I to make worshipping Him our #1 priority. We have grown very slack in this. I think not many of us bother to worship Him in a church when we're on vacation. We would not want to take a vacation from His grace and His gifts but we have no problem taking a vacation from His worship.

He expects you and I to be more excited about Him than about anything else. Even baseball. Even computers. Even the opposite sex. Even making money. Even our work. How do we *get* excited about Him? How do we go from just knowing He is there and passively depending on His forgiveness, to REALLY BEING EXCITED ABOUT HIM? Well, you've got to be seeing Him work in your life. If He does something in your life--and the Scripture promises He *will* do lots of powerful things in your life if you turn towards Him and give Him your attention--you will find it so "cool" you will not want anything else to get you *more* "cranked up."

This commandment means we need to make deliberate, conscious maybe costly decisions to KEEP Him as the first and last worship-worthy thing in my life. I should not say *thing* for He is not a thing. He is a person. My wife expects and hopes that I will love her and be excited about her. My daughters, each of them, expect from me that I will love them and be fascinated with them. My parents, though they live 1,500 miles away, expect me to love them and to listen to their ideas and needs with interest and concern. These are all persons. But God is more of a PERSON than any of these I've mentioned. And He expects and demands that I make Him first and keep Him first in my life. It means I have to deliberately remember to do that.

That's why I go to church every Sunday.

It's why I tithe and give to Him first and try my best not to allow any other demand to rob Him of first place.

I try to make decisions about other issues He has spoken about: family, how I speak to people; being fair, and so forth. He wants His "opinion" on matters to be more important to me than anyone else's. Because His Name is *Qanna'*.

It doesn't matter if other people do not understand, do not choose to worship Him along with me or do not approve. I don't have to answer to them and ultimately I need HIS approval more than I need theirs. He is the One who loves me, who gave His Son for me, who condescends with His own precious Spirit to dwell with me here. He is worthy. He is worthy of obedience. If He can forgive me all that He had to, He is worthy of my trying to make Him first and working to keep Him first. He is worthy of being willing to open myself up to *new* areas of making Him first, too. May you make Him first in your life. If He is not yet, why not decide here today to ponder this and to explore what it means to be a devotee of the first commandment. I surely have not said all there is to say about it. Study it; pray through it; seek His face in it and He will meet you in His sweet and gentle and powerful grace.

DARTMOUTH BIBLE NOTES

FROM THE TEACHING MINISTRIES OF
DARTMOUTH BIBLE CHURCH



Series: The Ten Commandments

Scripture: **Exodus 20:5-7** ; John 4:19-24

Neil C. Damgaard, Th.M.

Lesson 4 August 22nd, 1993

The Second Commandment

Introduction In the Standard-Times newspaper on Sundays, in the *Attitude* magazine, there is each week a restaurant review. I usually read it and I enjoy reading the reviewer's opinions of various eateries around. They vary widely of course, but I find interesting the differences between restaurants and the distinct ways in which certain places serve food. Davey's Locker is quite a bit different from the Portuguese Shanty. The Old Country Buffet does not do things the same way as the China Royal and they do things a little differently than the Chowder House in Fairhaven. I've always thought it would be interesting if sometime somebody would begin to write a "church review" column. You know, one Sunday they would attend the Vineyard, worship with them and write 'em up. Another Lord's Day they would attend "IntNaz", worship with them and write 'em up. Another Sunday they would attend Hixville, worship with them and write 'em up. There are differences in how people worship God just as there are differences in how they serve food. Churches offer worship to God in divergent ways, placing emphasis on different aspects of worship. Sometimes the differences are within the boundaries of what is appropriate and other times, churches fall into error in how they worship.

The second commandment that God gave to Moses for Israel falls on the heels of the first one. The first one commanded them not to worship any other God and the second one commanded them not to worship the true God in the wrong way. Now, I think among us evangelical Christians we take for granted--without even noticing it much--the great *freedom* that we all indulge ourselves in, in taking liberties in worship styles from one evangelical church to another. We have grown so used to the openness and liberty of New Testament worship and the message of grace. We are keenly aware of the *absence* of a grace message and a New Testament emphasis if we happen to stumble into a liberal Protestant church or some other category of which we would not feel is Bible-believing. But amongst the evangelical family, we enjoy the differences in worship style and we pick and choose churches pretty much like we do restaurants--on taste, preferences and how well they serve us.

The Commandment Itself But we need to remember that there ARE some basic, inviolable rules for worshipping God. He must not be approached carelessly or with *too* much freedom or innovation. He is still a holy God just as He was 3,400 years ago. Time does not make Him less holy. And the second commandment is very specific about one aspect of worshipping Him which must be guarded against--strictly. We read the second commandment in Exodus 20:4-5a: ***You shall not make for yourself an idol, or any likeness of what is in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the water under the earth. You shall not worship them or serve them.*** Let's consider the parts of the commandment: 1) a prohibition 2) an evil creativity 3) devotion-purposed art 4) a second prohibition.

You shall not - God gets to prohibit things. Let there be no debate about this. Since He is God and since He is holy and perfect, it is His divine prerogative to tell us TO DO certain things and NOT TO DO others. If this seems too elementary for you, just pick up the paper and read through it--any day...

Make for yourself - We esteem creativity in people most of the time. Creativity is a thing which sets us apart from all other creatures. It is a thing which reflects our Maker. But creativity which drifts off into *fantasy* over God's appearance is not something which enhances our worship. It destroys our worship, God says.

Idol or image - Art in itself is a good thing,, depending on the theme, the motivations and the subject matter. But if the subject matter is intended, or just *results in* adoration itself, and this becomes more important to the artist or his fans than God, then this is something which God says, "Steer clear of it."

I think today church structures and sanctuaries can tempt us in this area. Everyone wants a comfortable, attractive place to worship which they would not be ashamed to bring a friend to. But if the PLACE starts to take too much of my attention rather than the purpose of the place then this is a violation of the second commandment.

God went out of his way to *specify* art which would resemble heavenly beings (this might be birds--big time in Egypt--or it might be angels), land animals and sea animals. Biology is a wonderful area of study but if the biology becomes *theology*, it becomes sin. This is what we have with the trend to just accept evolution as truth today. Ultimately, it is not that the theories of evolution are such a threat to faith that upsets Christians, it is that it does such a job of replacing God in people's lives.

Second prohibition - In 20:5a God repeats the command NOT to worship or serve such things. If He had to say it twice it must mean He knew people needed a repeat warning.

Applications It's easier to attach your affections to something you can see. The *means* to worship can be tantalizing and we forget the *end and object* of worship itself, if we are not careful. God doesn't want to be forgotten in our hearts. Sometimes when we are having some trial and we sense we're real close to the Lord--even though we may not be super happy--that is the moment when maybe we're worshipping Him most fully! I think many contemporary Christians attach too much importance to the music of worship. I am susceptible to this and I have to make a conscious effort not to sing our songs too automatically just because I like the "groovy" tunes...

Just as we do not use images to offer worship to the living God, we shouldn't let music or comfort replace the Lord Himself--we should not have too concrete a center for worship--such a practice is too close to what the heathen do (and did). We worship *by faith* just as we walk by faith. I think the place of worship can be comfortable; designed and decorated to edify, encourage and remind; but not so opulent that it rivals God in our affections and attention! (There is an unwritten rule in "brethren" churches. They generally have no decoration but Scripture verses around).

God is unseen--a Spirit invisible to our eyes. And as we worship Him there is nothing wrong (I believe) with having a *setting* which is conducive to the faith in which we are walking and worshipping. I don't think there's anything wrong with theologically correct symbols or Bible verses which direct us to the Savior. There's a dramatic story of this in Numbers 21. In their wanderings through the wilderness the people of Israel were attacked and tortured by fiery serpents. On God's instructions, Moses made a bronze serpent and set it up on a pole. If a bitten person looked up at the pole with the bronze serpent, he or she was healed. Now that story is dramatic enough, but when we get to 2 Kings 18:4, centuries later, during Hezekiah's reign we see that the old bronze serpent had been given a *name* ("Nehushtan") and had *itself* become the object of love and worship. Hezekiah wasted it... In John 4:19-24 there is some great truth about worship. There Jesus has been discussing (among other things) worship with the Samaritan woman. He pronounces that ***God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth.*** It isn't this place or that place, Jesus said, that is so significant. It is the *manner* of worship (*in spirit*, by *faith*) and it is the content of the beliefs (*in truth*) concern the Lord.

Dear ones, as you read through the Bible you cannot escape the distinct theme that a truly righteous and holy person will not allow anything to come between him and God. But I want to say something about the matter of *worshipping objects*. I do not think too many people in *this* culture struggle with actually bowing down to an object and singing chants to it or reciting prayers at it. It isn't that so much as it is the question of *affection and excitement* and what we are putting our trust in. If a

person had a statue, let's say, on their dashboard of Martin Luther. Now there's a good hero from church history... It would be fine to have this little model of a godly man--there is very little myth surrounding him. Anyone who knows anything about Luther knows he wasn't perfect--he had glaring weaknesses. But he was used of God tremendously and he had great determination and courage in the things of the Lord. And so it would be fine for me to admire Martin Luther and have a little model of him on my dash. But if I started to love that model so much that I thought about IT real often and wanted to be around it often...because it's something I can see and well, God, after all, I *can't* see--surely He understands. Dear ones, THAT is the sin. We have this compulsion to have this visible image of something--something we can see and touch. It is *hard* to walk by faith alone and to *keep* walking by faith alone! But as my faith grows and becomes stronger, I am more and more useful to the Lord and I find myself willing to trust Him for *bigger* things.

Idolatry is whenever anyone or anything usurps the place of God in our hearts. It could be money, love of country, family relationships, the Bible *itself*, music, worship preferences, fears, sports, music, an automobile, loyalty to my company, the church sanctuary or its furniture, and on and on.

But He alone is worthy of our complete affection and devotion. He, as the Person of God. You know, this series could also be called: a study in the holiness of God; or, a study in how to develop the fear of the Lord; or "How to Worship God..." When we gather together on Sundays or at other times for worship, it is HE that we worship. We should close our eyes, as a covenanted community bound together by the blood of the sin-bearer, Jesus--to offer up thanksgiving and praise and confession and supplication *invisibly*. For He Whom our eyeballs cannot yet see, HE sees and hears and delights in the adoration and proclamation of His holiness, His absolute uniqueness, His love and His plan.

DARTMOUTH BIBLE NOTES

FROM THE TEACHING MINISTRIES OF
DARTMOUTH BIBLE CHURCH



Series: The Ten Commandments
Scripture: **Exodus 20:7**; 3:13-15

Neil C. Damgaard, Th.M.
Lesson 5 September 5th, 1993

The Third Commandment

Introduction Have you ever heard of the "New Age Movement?" Many have but maybe a few of you have not yet heard this expression. It's a relatively new term which describes a social, cultural, political, sexual and philosophical *re-structuring* of beliefs, morals and lifestyles which is occurring mainly in this country and in other modern Western nations. It basically began with "the sixties" and Christians are particularly upset about it and for many reasons. "New-agey" talk sounds like this:

"Everything is God" "All things are one" "Man is God" "The mind creates reality"

And studying the New Age movement has become a big thing, not only among non-Christians but among Christians too. I think Christians can get too paranoid about New Age things and too sucked into studying it. The best way to know a counterfeit is to know the truth so well that any counterfeit is easily detectable--and so I have not flung myself or us into a big quest to really know all the ins and outs of the New Age movement. And today is not a lesson, or the beginning of a series of lessons on the New Age movement. There's plenty of good resources "out there" on that which you can study yourselves (there are two in the foyer today!). But I do wish to say one thing about the New Age movement today: essentially, its threat is quite simple. The New Age movement is, at heart, a violation of the Third Commandment.

The Commandment and Its Background We read in Exodus 20:7

where Jehovah God gave the Third Commandment to Moses: *You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain, for the Lord will not leave him unpunished who takes His name in vain.* Before this are two other verses which we did not read in the last message and we need to look at them now. You see, God didn't just "fax" down a few sterile, impersonal rules for people to memorize and sort of robotically adhere to... They are based on His character and His person AS GOD. And in Ex. 20:5,6 we see God explaining to Moses, *for I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children, on the third and the fourth generations of those who hate Me, but showing lovingkindness to thousands, to*

those who love Me and keep My commandments. It is only after explaining this to Moses that God then goes on to give His Third great Commandment and it also has to do with Himself as a Person. God takes how people relate to Him very seriously. I think *that itself* is a testimony to His love. He could be as the New Agers like to imagine, an impersonal and untouchable God. But He is *not* untouchable or unmovable. ✓

Actually, why anyone would *want to believe* in a god like that is beyond me...In fact, R.C. Sproul wrote that many people today would *rather* believe in a *personal* devil than believe in an *impersonal* God...

Now let me say at this point that I can think of no reason at all why the Third Commandment would have changed at all because of Jesus' ministry. Just because we are Christians, and we worship and depend on God's Son for salvation does not *exempt* you or me from taking this commandment very seriously. It's important for us to understand it, to honor it and to teach it and "spread it around." We are not **SAVED** by trying to keep the Third Commandment any more than we are saved by participating in the Lord's Table, being baptized with water, passing out tracts, giving a ride to someone or any other act or collection of acts. We are saved through receiving by faith alone the free gift of salvation through Jesus Christ. But once I am saved, **NOW** I want to learn God's commandments, honor them more and more in my life, and spread them around--first in my family and then also to as many others as I might have any influence with.

Now, in Exodus 3:13-15 we read where God originally revealed His name. You see, God *does have* a name. In fact, He has many names. But His primary name is *Yhwh* and that is the name He told Moses to publicize. *Yhwh* means "I AM WHO I AM".

Names are interesting things. My name means, in Danish, a dam on a farm. And people often take their names seriously. Do you remember when the great basketball player changed his name? Lew Alcindor became Kareem Abdul Jabaar. It was a significant thing for him and he was making a statement of some kind. We're hearing protests over some sports *team* names. The Cleveland Indians, the Atlanta Braves, the Kansas City Chiefs and the Washington Redskins have all taken criticism recently because their names identify with native Americans and apparently some native Americans resent this.

To know someone's name is to know their identity and something of their nature probably, too. God's name is very special and holy, whether we are talking about *Jehovah* or just the name "God" or "the Lord" or "Jesus Christ." The commandment demands that we do not take His name lightly. It demands that we avoid taking *HIM* lightly. Normally people associate this commandment with profanity or any careless or irreverent use of God's name. To be sure, *in vain* means

empty, groundless, without basis, insincere. When we use the term "God" or "Christ" or any of the other words which truly describe God we should only use them carefully and deliberately. God has revealed His name to point us to His very being and to let us know that He is here, He is holy, He intends to have relationships with people and He is fully *involved* with His creation...

In the Third Commandment, God was prohibiting His people from verbally using His name in any way other than with conscious respect and deliberate reference to Him. He was also prohibiting them from taking Him for granted. Just as people who espouse New Age doctrine would, at best, put God in the "back seat" of their beliefs, so believers too need to avoid the same thing. It's fine to praise the Lord on a Sunday morning but do we go out and say "Oh, my God?" carelessly, using it as an "expletive?" Do we use God's existence or name as a way of exclaiming surprise or of cursing people, as if we could invoke God to do our bidding?

I have never liked the silly expression that you hear people use, "the man upstairs." God is not the "man upstairs" or the "Big Guy in the Sky." No, *our God is an awesome God, He reigns from heaven above, with wisdom power and love, our God is an awesome God.*

Careless and profane outbursts which refer to Him insult the Lord but more than that, they demonstrate that although we may sing neat praise songs on a Sunday morning we don't *really* believe them. If we did we would guard our speech. And it wouldn't be to guard it around me. Do you want to know what makes me mad? (I mean *mad*). It's when someone acts differently around me than they would around someone else. As if I ^{was} someone to answer to...

You see, this commandment gets right down to the question, "how do you feel about the Lord?" Is He *really* present? Is He *really* holy as we say and sing? He is not only interested in your having invited Jesus to be your Savior but He is vitally interested in your living a holy life. He is interested in your developing what Scripture calls "the fear of the Lord." He is interested in your working God into your daily consciousness and walking with Him all day long, talking to Him and acknowledging Him in every place where you might be.

I think we also need to be aware that since we claim to know God through His Son, Jesus Christ, it happens that everything we do either brings honor and glory to His name or shames His name. It is disheartening to *hear about* and *read about* so many well-known evangelical leaders failing morally. I know, up against how many there are it is really not a big number--but it is agonizing to see the name of our Savior dragged through the dirt today, as it is whenever a leader makes a big mistake. The name of Jesus Christ is the most precious name there is.

In the Book of Revelation there are some interesting and wonderful verses that have to do with *names*. To the Christians in Pergamum (2:13) Jesus, Himself said, I

know where you dwell, where Satan's throne is; and you hold fast My name and did not deny My faith... In 3:12 Jesus made this promise: He who overcomes, I will make Him a pillar in the temple of My God, and I will write upon Him the name of My God and the name of the city of My God, the new Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from My God and My new name. In the vision of Jesus' second coming, John the Apostle describes Jesus (19:12): ***and His eyes are a flame of fire, and upon His head are many diadems, and He has a name written upon Him which no one knows except Himself.*** Whatever all these things will end up meaning, it is clear that with the Lord His name, and the names He gives us are very important. That is because His relationship, His *daily walk* with us is very important to Him. He does not relate to us casually and He expects that you and I shall not grow casual with Him.

Let me close by suggesting that you undertake a study in your own Bible reading and study. Get to know the names of God in the Bible. See how God refers to Himself, how the prophets and apostles referred to Him. Get for yourself a deep appreciation for the name and character of your God. Many of the hymns we sing are good instructional tools for learning His names. I hope He is your God. He has made Himself accessible at all times through His Spirit and by means of faith. He isn't some unknown "force." He is a Person. He is the Lord.

I don't get too upset about the New Age movement because it is clear what the evil of it is. It is a violation of the Third Commandment. It teaches people that God has no name, that He has no discernible character or personality and it strips God of His dignity. No "movement" plays better into his hands who would do anything possible to strip the true God of His dignity. Satan loves the New Age movement. He doesn't have to get everyone to become card-carrying Satanists. If he gets them intrigued and beguiled and seduced with New Age teaching and fun then He has accomplished his vile insurrection. Fortunately for us, ***greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world.***



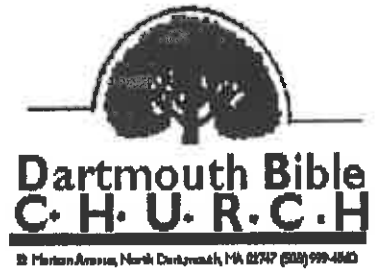
the
"New Age"
Movement

a social, cultural, political,
sexual and philosophical
RE-STRUCTURING of beliefs,
morals and lifestyles
based originally
on Far Eastern
religious ideas

-- *NCD*

DARTMOUTH BIBLE NOTES

FROM THE TEACHING MINISTRIES OF
DARTMOUTH BIBLE CHURCH



Series: The Ten Commandments

Scripture: Deuteronomy 5:12-15 ; Mark 2:27

Neil C. Damgaard, Th.M.

Lesson 6 September 12th, 1993

Demonstrating the Fourth Commandment

Introduction For the most part, children develop their own convictions about life by what they see in their parents. I still believe this, by the way. Yes, the schools have some influence and yes the child's friends have some influence, but the greatest impact on a child's development of his *own* convictions comes from within his own home and from his own parents. It may be that the child develops a conviction about something he, himself, wishes to duplicate. Or, it might be the opposite: "*My old man believed that...and I'll never think that way.*" But I am convinced that children basically learn what's what in their home, as they watch how their parents live. It is true that they depart from it for a while as they enter that state known as the "Twilight Zone" which we call adolescence. But eventually, most kids return in some fashion to the way they were raised. I heard this ditty:

Johnny had a little friend who used to hate the cops. His Mom would say, "John, cops are good,"

But friend would say, "No, they're not."

When Johnny got a car, his own, he revved it up one day. Friend said, "Hey, Johnny, let's race that cop, and blow his cruiser away."

But Johnny thought, "Would Mom do that?" and stayed within the limit. Friend protested, "Hey Johnny, who knows what's cool? Don't figit; don't sweat it."

But Johnny's heart really knew the score, So down, he kept, his speed.

Now the moral is this, we'd like to think, Johnny came under conviction.

Or was it just (we fear to think) "Chief of Police" was Dad's official position?

Our persuasion is that children learn from their parents. As Christian parents we have a different set of messages to send our kids than maybe non-Christians might. Perhaps the biggest difference in the way a Christian is going to raise his kid is in the degree of *deliberateness* in his approach. Many normal non-Christian parents will pretty much "go with the flow" without thinking through what they do, why they do it and what messages they're sending their kids.

A Deliberate Approach But hopefully a genuine Christian parent is going to have a deliberate agenda about what he or she feels this child needs to see in the home. Instead of just being reactionary all the time, the good Christian parent knows why we live the way we do, how to be balanced and reasonable, and when to draw the line when the world begins to encroach on our convictions. A good Christian parent is going to deliberately think through on what he or she wants the children to learn. And Christian homes will have different flavors to them. Some will emphasize the Law while others emphasize mercy. Some will be strong on Scripture memory and others in the area of hospitality. Some Christian homes will shine when it comes to giving to the Lord's work and others will shine in prayer together as a family. But whatever *your* Christian home shines in, it needs to be from a deliberate strategy of *intentionally* bringing the Lord into your family life.

We come today to the fourth commandment in our examination of the ten commandments. This commandment is found in the Old Testament in several places (Exodus 20:8-11; Deut. 5:12-15; Numbers 15:32-36) but it is the only one of the ten which is not mandated again in the New Testament and endorsed as an eternally moral principle. If there was one issue that Jesus was continually getting into trouble with the Pharisees about, it was the matter of the Sabbath. And it was surely not (as they thought) because He was an immoral, rebellious punk. It was because the Son of God knew the true intent behind why God gave this commandment. Jesus knew why there *was* this commandment and what it was for. But before we go much further, let me say that *my* intent today is to focus our thinking of the fourth commandment on how we are DEMONSTRATING IT TO OUR KIDS. Rather than a lesson in theoretical theology, I want to walk you through a lesson in *applied* theology, as part of our celebration of Christian families today.

Let me open this up by asking you, as you were growing up, did Sunday hold any "specialness" in your life? For me, it was during the 7th, 8th and 9th grades that Sunday was most special. After 9th grade for me Sunday decayed into just another day to party until I became a Christian at 19 years old. But as a Junior High I attended church by myself, walking much of the time and enjoying the community of the local church. Sunday was also a day when my folks almost never fought and absolutely never drank (maybe because Sunday tends to follow Saturday and Friday night...) But I had three years when Sunday was a special and *different* day.

The Commandment Itself Now, what does this have to do with the fourth commandment? The sabbath day was the seventh day in the week and then the Church changed the special day to Sunday. So what does the fourth commandment have to do with us? Well, we *could* just take that interpretation and say the fourth

commandment is irrelevant to us. But I am not comfortable with that. I believe there is a sabbath *principle* that carries on for us and shall until the Lord returns. We are not bound to recognize the sabbath day as they were instructed to in the O.T. This is the error of the Seventh Day Adventists, and other sabbatarians. Let's consider the commandment itself: In the commandment God commands Israel, ***Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy... (Exodus 20:8)***. It begins with a positive and, in the original Hebrew, very powerful word ***Remember***. It was as if God was saying *Let Me make Myself very, very clear. I don't want you to work. I don't want your son to work. I don't want your daughter to work. I don't want your man-servant or your maid-servant to work. I don't even want your animals to work. Give the cattle a break--take the yoke off their necks. And if you have guests visiting you don't let them work either. I want all work to come to a screeching halt once a week.* Why do you think God was so emphatic?

The answer is really quite simple. Because He knows us better than we know ourselves. When the Pharisees accused Jesus of *breaking* God's Word about the sabbath--a blasphemous thing to do in itself--He replied with what I believe is probably the single most important verse in the Bible on the sabbath. We read it in Mark's Gospel (Mark 2:27) ***The sabbath was made for man, not man for the sabbath.*** Now this verse doesn't give us license to exempt ourselves from the sabbath principle. Jesus didn't say "The sabbath was *subordinated* to man..." He said that the reason God **MADE** the sabbath was **FOR** man. That assumes that man will make use of it. He also said that it is not to be *abused* by man, and that is what was happening.

We might set up all kinds of rules for each other about what we can and can't do on a Sunday. We could start monitoring who is here every Sunday and who is not. In other parts of the country there are churches where what a family does on a Sunday afternoon is a big issue--I say Sunday *afternoon* because in those places the families are in church on Sunday morning, together; and Sunday night, together. Sunday morning and Sunday night are not an issue. But in those churches there is a spirit of *monitoring* what each other does on Sunday afternoon. I think having a judgmental attitude and watchdogging spirit grieves the Holy Spirit and contradicts the spirit of what the Lord intended. He intended for the sabbath day, and for Sunday, to be **BLESSING**, not a curse.

Negative Demonstration We are, in essence, cursing ourselves by refusing to take advantage of the sabbath and **NOW** standing by while secular society completely dismantles what is left of any sabbath principle. What are our kids learning in all this? On the negative side, they are learning

- 1) not to take the ten commandments too seriously, because Dad and Mom don't;

2) they are learning that leading a frantic and frenzied and *driven* lifestyle with only *occasional* down-time is normal, and so *they* learn to drive themselves, make that extra hundred bucks, etc.;

3) they are learning that distance from people in the church is "normal" since I'm not around them that much because Dad and Mom believe other things are more important--so, they are missing the teaching that believers are to enjoy one another in a relaxed way without a clock being on the times we have together on the Lord's Day, and that having only *casual* relationships rather than deep and warm relationships, must be "normal."

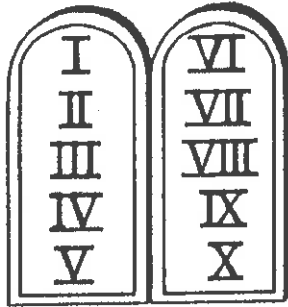
4) they are learning that *personal recreation* is more important than worshipping God with the brethren.

Postive Demonstration But let's lay this commandment out as a potential blessing, as it's supposed to be. God gave the commandment originally so that man would have a built-in opportunity to RE-CHARGE. You know how you put those re-chargeable batteries on "re-charge?" Well, that's the sabbath. It was always intended by God to give us a weekly day for physical, emotional and spiritual renewal. Why we insist on forfeiting one of God's greatest blessings to us, is beyond me; it's crazy! God knew that we would be hard-workers and a focused kind of people and that we would burn ourselves and our families out if we didn't have a weekly change of pace. He knew we would need a weekly MAINTENANCE time; a time to turn the computers off, to change my pace and my activities and a weekly time to get with my brethren in Christ and worship Him. He knew we would *need* that. The problem is, we think we're smarter than God. We think He doesn't understand my budget needs. That He is really incapable of blessing me financially *sufficiently* unless I work 80 hours a week. But we are not smarter than God is. We pay for our choices with stress and with the wrong messages we are sending our children.

Dear ones, we need to *communicate* to our children that the Lord's Day is important. I don't mean just to *say* it's important. They don't just learn with their ears but with their eyes too! I believe we can all re-structure how we handle the Lord's Day so that *it is* a real blessing, and especially for our children.

1. Look forward to and enjoy the Lord's Day.
2. Use a different "pace" on Sunday than you do on the other six days. Your kids will pick this up and grow to look forward to it. Of course, coming here to worship and for Sunday School instruction *automatically* sets a different pace for you!
3. Save special things for Sunday.
4. When Sunday cannot be a special day for you and the kids, set aside another day or another couple of half-days. Do not short-change yourself, the Lord, or your kids.
5. If you absolutely *have* to work on an occasional Sunday, then at least make the *other* Sundays special and different from other days.
6. Be patient with your brethren in this issue. As you begin to demonstrate the fourth commandment in your own family, do not forget what Jesus said was the *SECOND* greatest commandment: to *love your neighbor as yourself*. Dear ones, we want a *gentle spirited* church here--not a harsh-spirited church. We've got to maintain patience with each other as we each hammer out our convictions on the Christian life. May the Lord Jesus fill us up with His sweet Spirit and give us grace so that we may truly demonstrate our love for His commandments to our kids and to demonstrate our love for Him and His Word.

COMMANDMENTS



Major
Old
Testament
Passages
on the

Fourth Commandment

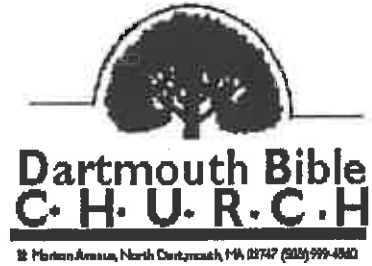
Exodus 20: 8-11

Numbers 15: 32-36

Deuteronomy 5: 12-15

DARTMOUTH BIBLE NOTES

FROM THE TEACHING MINISTRIES OF
DARTMOUTH BIBLE CHURCH



Series: The Ten Commandments
Scripture: **Exodus 20:1-17**; Exodus 6:1-4

Neil C. Damgaard, Th.M.
Lesson 7 September 19th, 1993

How to Relate to Parents

Introduction This week U. S. Attorney General Janet Reno said that teaching children early to obey the law is the key to eliminating violence in America. And she said that the attorneys in our communities are just the ones to do the teaching. She said that the lawyers in our towns should spend the time to go out into the communities and teach kids, from 2 or 3 years old on up to obey the law. She said, "We will never be able to build enough prisons 18 years from now to house the children we neglect today" (Anne Thompson, Associated Press; 9/14/93).

As you look at families around you in our town today, would you say that generally children are obedient to parents? Is there a basic respect for Dads and Moms by the kids, or is there something else? The fifth commandment that God handed down to Moses commanded the people of Israel to *Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be prolonged in the land which the Lord your God gives you (Exodus 20:12)*. You may notice with some interest that this commandment may sound longer than you remember... In the N.T. we have the Apostle Paul saying this to the Ephesians, *Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. Honor your father and your mother (which is the first commandment with a promise) that it may be well with you and that you may live long on the earth. And, fathers, do not provoke your children to anger but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord (Ephesians 6:1-3)*. This is Paul's re-statement of the fifth commandment and it's clear, isn't it, that Christians are supposed to be this way? You and I and *our* children need to see that whether we honor or obey our parents or not, is not just an issue between me and them--it is ultimately an issue between me *and* God.

As we said, the fifth commandment goes on a little longer than we tend to remember. It has a promise attached to it. There is a promise for a longer life and for a higher measure of prosperity. Now this is interesting because one must ask, "why should my degree of having an obedient spirit--or not--affect the length or happiness of my life?" Actually the answer is simple: because that's how God has made things. He has laid down the "specs" for how things work in this universe. And part of how things work is that parents need to expect children to be obedient

to what their parents say to them; parents need to *model* a submissive spirit and instruct their children in how to be obedient; parents need to maintain an environment which is easy for the kids to *be* obedient, and then the children need to *decide themselves* TO BE obedient. That's the "natural science" of the universe. If the parent is doing his or her job then he or she is not going to expect unreasonable, arbitrary or worse, wrong things of the child. When a parent says DO THIS or DON'T DO THAT it should be a command of love, always looking out for the best interest of the child. The child TRUSTS the parents' judgment and while he may not always LIKE the parents' demands, he *trusts* them.

As Paul re-stated the commandment, his comment is *for this is right*. Fourteen centuries after Moses saw the "finger of God" give forth the fifth commandment, Paul pronounced it RIGHT. And it is because God is part of our lives to begin with that we can expect our children to obey us--so long as we do not command them to break one of God's laws. Otherwise, they are to obey us *in the Lord*. Our Christian families are subsets of a bigger family; the family of God.

Now, Moses said that God told him to tell Israel to *honor* their parents; that is what came first. Obeying parents--which probably was an issue of some sort among the believers of Asia Minor or in the ancient city of Ephesus--is really one *expression* of honoring them. Honoring them means five things:

To respect them. This means there is an automatic response of respect both verbally and *facially*. It means my kid is not critical OF ME, at least not openly or frequently.

To listen to them. Eye-contact is a show of respect. It amazes me how many children today are not taught to look into an adult's eyes, speak up, and listen attentively.

To acknowledge their position. This means that we never forget that in God's design the parent is the overseer. They always deserve to be called "Dad and Mom" and treated with some deference. Now it is true that in the past generation children have been rescued from being looked at as mere property. Abuse of children is much more properly watched for and safeguarded against today, and I am glad for this. But the pendulum has swung the other way now--we have the "cult of the child" and kids are cashing in on this.

To include them. Especially when they are older, parents need to feel like they are still a wanted and needed part of the family. Yes, it may require some effort to include them, but it is part of honoring them.

When they need it, *to provide for them*. This is what Jesus did, even as

He hung on the cross in His most terrible moment. He gave His mother, Mary, over to John for care now that He was leaving her.

Other Issues for Us Now, I believe there are a few other issues for us which come off of this commandment.

First of all there is a lot at stake with how well we train our children to be respectful. Their own long-term happiness/success are at stake. Oh sure, they may pull off making lots of money even though they were rebellious. But that is not the kind of prosperity the Bible pushes us towards. God wants us to miss *none* of His blessings and if I want the FULL MEASURE of all the good things He wants for me I need to work on obedience to Him. Part of that is for me to honor my parents and teach and expect my children to do the same for me. I believe many parents today have CEASED EXPECTING their children to act in an honorable way towards them. We watch movies where parents are portrayed as arbitrary, over-bearing, abusing, drunken half-wits with only HALF the good judgment which their children possess (and that's on a good day!)

Second is the question, "When does obedience transition into respect?" In short, I believe a good rule-of-thumb today is eighteen. By that point the kids should be starting to make some responsible decisions on their own and I should not have to impose obedience on them. There may still be some occasions after eighteen when they need to obey, especially if I am still supporting them. But mainly by that point their response should be one of respect and honor and obedience is less something which comes up very often. Their thought should be, "Well, out of respect for my parents wishes I will be in by 11 PM" not just "Well, I *have to* be in by 11 so I guess I'll grudgingly do it." By the way--Pastor Bill Hybels made a good comment: "A grumbling spirit casts a dark shadow over the atmosphere of a home, whereas good-natured obedience is the surest way to ease tension and promote harmony" (*Laws That Liberate*, p.61, 1985).

Third, is how to enforce honor in your home. Now, like wives submitting to husbands--if there is an environment of love (and Eph. 6:4) it will be far easier for the child to obey. If there is not the child may obey or he/she may not. But I think this is something you can *expect* in your home while not having to demand it. If you are a controller and a dominator-kind of person, you will find it far harder to win obedience. But if obedience is just the *natural expectation* it will happen far more frequently and naturally.

Last is the problem a single parent faces... In our day and age it has become so easy to make babies, and make more and more of them. We figure, "the process feels pretty good"--and in modern America we worship anything which feels good. Or, our young people like the idea of having little babies. The problem is little babies have a way of turning into toddlers and toddlers turn into kindergartners and

kindergartners turn into fifth graders and fifth graders turn into juniors in high school. What felt neat at one time turns into a big commitment. And a long commitment. And we have a society right now with lots and lots of single parents. And *they* quite often find the task of creating an obedient child more of a challenge than they know how to deal with. And they hurt and they agonize and they get confused and they feel alone in the process. I just want to say one thing here. Single parenting ought to be avoided at all costs. If it is *thrust* on us then we need to trust God to give grace to learn how to deal with it. But let's not GO OUT OF OUR WAY to get into it.

Please do not misunderstand me. I am not unfeeling for the intensity and the drama of why we have so much single parenting today. But God calls us as Christians to be different from the world; to *not be conformed to this world, but to be transformed by the renewing of our minds...* Let's allow and invite the Holy Spirit to renew our minds about the matter of the family. Let's surrender ourselves to HIS will and seek out what that is in the matter of how to raise children, how to relate to our aging parents and how to give honor where honor is due.

You know--Christians are supposed to be honor-giving people. We're supposed to be THAT KIND of people; looking for ways to honor our parents; to honor people in government; to honor one another and, of course, to honor God. That's a real important part of the change that is supposed to be taking place inside of a person when they come to know Christ and begin to grow in sanctification. This is *in contrast* to the natural thing to do: to honor *myself* and to cynically tear down the honor of other people.

This commandment has not become obsolete, dear ones. It is still the basic law of civilized life. It still comes out of the heart of God and He does not change. It still is something we can expect in our families and need to practice and give attention to. May the Lord give us grace to *desire it*, to be like the psalmist, *O, how I love Thy law; it is my meditation all day.*

To Honor

- *to RESPECT
them*
- *To LISTEN TO
them*
- *To ACKNOWLEDGE
them*
- *To INCLUDE
them*
- *To PROVIDE
for them*

a good quote...

*a grumbling spirit casts
a dark shadow over the
atmosphere of a home,
whereas good-natured
obedience is the surest
way to ease tension and
promote harmony .*

-- Pastor Bill Hybels

DARTMOUTH BIBLE NOTES

FROM THE TEACHING MINISTRIES OF
DARTMOUTH BIBLE CHURCH



Series: The Ten Commandments
Scripture: Exodus 20:12; Matthew 5:21-26

Neil C. Damgaard, Th.M.
Lesson 8 September 26th, 1993

Murder, She Wrote? (The Sixth Commandment)

Introduction What if abortion is really murder? I'm sure most of you already are convinced that it is; I am. But just for purposes of discussion, what if we find out that aborting an unborn fetus is, in reality, homicidal--or in the less than 1% of cases where it is performed to save the mother's life--voluntary manslaughter? Many people today hide behind the seeming *uncertainty* of the question. They say "Well, it's a shame, but since we can't know for sure" (supposedly) "we'll live with it as a necessary remedy for unwanted pregnancies, whenever and wherever we decide that a pregnancy is unwanted." But if the evasion from the verdict proves unsuccessful, and we find out that abortion--all abortion--is, in the end (so far as God is concerned), homicide, assassination, murder--well, how bad would that be?

Today we come in our series to the sixth commandment. It is, without a doubt, the most famous and the best known. The sixth, seventh and eighth commandments are expressed in only two words each in the original Hebrew language: they could be translated simply, *No murder, no adultery, no stealing*. Period. None of this. Any instance of these whatsoever is sin and rebellion and deserving of judgment by a just God. God did not suggest these things as guidelines. He did not call together a committee to study killing, sexual infidelity or theft. He did not say sometimes these things are wrong and sometimes they're understandable. He just told Moses, "Tell My people *no murder, no adultery, no stealing*." And this is the basis, in fact, for any civilization. When these three prohibitions become watered down, you start to see the demise, the crumbling, the downfall of a society.

But it really is pretty easy to weasel out of a commandment if you want to. There will always be people to agree, who are going to say, "Yeah, that was way too harsh and way too simplistic...Let's make it much harder to call that action a 'crime'." Excuses are easy to generate: One time a farmer asked his neighbor if he might borrow a rope. "Nope, sorry. I'm using my rope to tie up my milk," replied the neighbor. "Rope can't tie up milk," said the farmer. "I know," said the neighbor, "but when a man doesn't want to do something one reason is as good as another."

This sixth commandment, **No murder** has many applications. The obvious is that believers (and everyone else too) need to avoid, at all costs, taking another person's life by murder (Hebrew: *rasah*, "to slay"). Of all sub-groups in a society, the Christians ought to be the leaders in helping to *preserve* that society by not allowing this sin to be named among us even once. There is no excuse for it, period. We're not going to get all psycho-analytical today and ask why do people sometimes feel compelled to kill another person. But, they do. And as remote as you may find the possibility we are not immune from this, either. At all costs we need to avoid it.

But I do believe we should consider something else. Other than the motivation of rage, I don't understand the psychology of murder. But for us I think a sub-application of this would be not to promote things which--for lack of a better word--*rejoice* in the killing of other people. I wonder why murder mysteries and movies hold such fascination for us? The Scripture tells us that *love rejoiceth not in iniquity*. We may think it innocent enough to just get into a good murder story...I wonder why we can get so fascinated by it? It may be good, if it is justice we crave. Or it may be bad if we just like the ghastly and the weird. Let's take another look today at the kind of entertainment we buy into. Yes, dear ones--the entertainment we buy into IS open to scrutiny. It IS up for discussion. Entertainment is a tricky thing. It really *is* an issue from the insides of our being. The things that truly entertain a person *really says something* about the true status of a person's heart; and for a Christian, *something about* how much they have been sanctified.

Now, the opposite side of a spirit of murder is a spirit of love. One might view the universe as a place where two spirits are contending. One is the spirit of destruction and the other is the spirit of love. Satan is surely at the root of one. He is called by Jesus a *murderer*. And at the root of the other is the Holy Spirit. Christians are to cultivate the fruit of the Holy Spirit in their lives. The first of these, Paul wrote, is love.

When we turn to this passage in Matthew 5 we see that the sixth commandment extends much further, really, than just whether I have ever actually gone out and blown someone away or not. God looks right down into the heart. The record book on me and you contains the deeds of the heart as well as the deeds of the hand. And when we screw up the courage to take an honest look at the heart, what do we find? Is there love there--seeking a person's welfare? Or, is there a spirit of murder and rage there?

Jehovah told Moses to tell His people, **No murder**. Pretty plain. There should be none of that. Jesus told His listeners on the hilltop, **But I say unto you...** Dear ones, you and I need to see that the commandments call to us to root out the *spirit* of sin.

I tried all summer to keep at the weeds up and down our front sidewalk. I failed, as you may have noticed. Some came out easily. Others go down too deep; or at least I didn't want to spend all day at it... And they grow so quickly and

easily. No sooner did I pull out one when two more were choking out the flowers the next day. Sin is like this. Its roots go down deep and Jesus struck at those roots--at least to put us on notice that the battle with sin takes hard work and a long-term *stick-to-itive-ness*.

Now, here is where I think we need to end up today. You may not have a gun or a knife or a bottle of poison under your coat ready to "waste" someone. But there is something which lurks in many of us, if not all of us, which needs rooting out. I'm talking about grudges. You need to become aware of them, dear ones. You need to ask the Holy Spirit to reveal them to you and you need to ask Him to strengthen you to do with that grudge what He has done to you--forgive. Let's read Romans 12:16-21...and 13:8-14, especially verse 14.

The flesh may cry out, "No. Justice, justice!" But the Lord says, ***Vengeance is mine, I will repay...*** Do you believe God is just? Do you believe He is able and planning to make it all right "in His time" (as we have sung today?)

I believe many Christians are saddled and hindered in their spiritual growth by NOT looking at the grudges they bear. You may have noticed that when we prepare for the Lord's Table, I will often point you to this and implore you to dig them out right then and there, take them to the cross and leave them there. Nothing is more contrary to our claim to know Jesus Christ than when we hold on to grudges. And sometimes people, believers too, will hold on to a grudge for years and will choose NOT to forgive. Dear ones, this spirit is here too. And it needs, with the help of the Holy Spirit, to be rooted out. It is not just my *introspective* preaching... It is a sixth commandment issue.

The spirit of vengeance seeks to wrest justice from God's hand and levy it *myself*. It can take subtle forms--a lack of accepting people, coldness, gossip, criticism, distrust and suspiciousness. And yes, you and I need to get a little introspective. It is far more than whether I have a police record, or not.

But here is what its like when I am growing in this. Its like being like Jesus, who although He was not deserving of *any* of the treatment He received, He forgave them. He cut loose the need to take vengeance. In fact, while being abused and tortured He prayed for them. He was full of love for them. Oh, there was pain all right. I don't believe Jesus would ever *deny* if something hurt. But instead of giving in to a spirit of murder, Jesus gave in to the Holy Spirit of love. And you and I need to *work hard* at giving in to the Spirit of love. We need to work hard at forgiving people--and not just doing it selectively.

Maybe this is why the Bible has so much to say, really, about love. It is a book *about* love. And to study the Ten Commandments together is not about just rooting out the bad stuff. Its about BUILDING IN the good stuff. I challenge you to take a prayerful look at this, dear ones. And may His Spirit enable you to avoid murder of all types.

DARTMOUTH BIBLE NOTES

FROM THE TEACHING MINISTRIES OF
DARTMOUTH BIBLE CHURCH



Series: The Ten Commandments
Scripture: Exodus 20:14 ; Matthew 5:27-32; Malachi 2

Neil C. Damgaard, Th.M.
Lesson 9 October 3rd, 1993

The Law of Loyal Love (The Seventh Commandment)

Introduction It is always a healthy thing to get "up to date" with the Lord when we celebrate the Lord's Table. By that I mean that we confess to Him those things that we have done in rebellion, or *felt* in rebellion and to make this confession before we participate in the Lord's Table. When we talked about the *sixth* commandment, dealing with murder, I made a big deal out of the *grudges* we hold in anger. Today as we consider the seventh commandment together, and as we have just celebrated the cross and the resurrection of Jesus, let us consider "welding together" the sixth and seventh commandments... For in the Hebrew text of Exodus 20 they are closely tied, *No murder, no adultery, no stealing*. Now, might there be a connection between *no murder* and *no adultery*? I'm not going to press this too far, but I think we *can* imagine the spirit of bitterness and hatred spilling into the spirit of unfaithfulness, can't we?

Now, here is what *can* happen.

- 1) One spouse *decides* or *discovers* "my spouse" does not interest me any more, sexually and so he/she starts looking for a new sexual partner.
- 2) A communication gap occurs for one reason or another and the couple drifts apart in general, opening one or the other spouse to outside temptation, and giving rise to an *openness* to someone else.
- 3) As a means of vengeance, one spouse "goes out, finds somebody, and has an affair."

When I was a youth director quite a number of years ago there was a girl whom I'll call Rose in our group. Rose was a pretty girl with a wonderful singing voice, everyone in the youth group loved her and she seemed to really want a close walk with Jesus. But at the end of her senior year we started seeing her only very infrequently and we weren't sure why. Then in the summer after her senior year we found out. She had become involved with a man (whom I'll call Jim) who had started a Bible study in his home. Jim had been an occasional attender at several of the area evangelical churches in that town but had never settled into any one church.

He knew a lot of Bible. He loved to "talk theology" and he was quite a debater. Rose had become enamored with Jim's charm and skill at teaching and before she knew it (or before *we* knew it) Jim announced he was leaving his wife and children and he and Rose were moving in together. Rose's plans for college were put on hold; Jim's wife was flabbergasted; the youth group was noticeably upset, and the elders of the church summoned Jim and Rose to come for counseling together. They selected me and the Associate Pastor to attempt the counseling. They came for two appointments and then dropped out of sight altogether. Jim told us that since he had been disciplined by another church--he was already under their ban somehow--that this made it OK to leave his wife and take up with Rose (whom he said he loved and believed that God had provided her for him since his wife would no longer meet his needs). He used Bible verses to support his actions. Rose's relationship with Jim lasted about two years, I think. She never went back to any church--to this day, to my knowledge, and the course of her life was radically changed.

Now, the seventh commandment in Exodus 20:14 makes God's will for our lives clear. God said *No adultery*. Jesus took the actual commandment further in Matthew 5:27-32 and said that it's not just what you actually go out and *DO* with the members of your body; it's what goes on in your *heart*. We can do a lot of things in our hearts that we would not generally have the courage or maybe the opportunity to do with the members of our bodies. Many people are murderers a thousand times over in their hearts though they have never taken up a gun or a knife or a bottle of poison and actually killed somebody. But they are just as guilty before a holy God as the "murder one" inmates in the federal prison. Because Jesus pointed out that God looks at the heart and holds everyone accountable for the deeds of their hearts, right alongside the deeds of their hands.

Another thing that Jesus dealt with--and then later, the apostle Paul dealt with it too--was the way that divorce drives even *more* people into adultery (5:32; 1 Cor. 7:10,11). So many around us today have adopted an almost *casual* attitude about divorce. Dear ones, what God takes very seriously man is a fool to make light of... And all I really want to say here about divorce is that it is like loading a program into a computer. The LOAD command does not actually run the program; but it sets the computer UP to RUN the program. When a person divorces his or her spouse, they make the spouse a prime candidate for adultery. That is how it works. One man; one woman. Period. God is quite clear on this. In Malachi 2 we have another passage which deals with divorce. God does nothing short of calling it *treachery* and his people had become so casual about it that they were perplexed that God would even think it was a big deal. And when you read the book of Malachi you see that these were not STAY AWAY FROM CHURCH people. They were sacrificing, regularly worshipping Israelites. And yet their attitude about their marriages (and other things) had become so rotten that God sent them a prophet!

Now, the commandment for you and I is plain, dear ones. Commit yourself to not falling into any kind of an adulterous situation at all. Avoid it like AIDS. Don't expose yourselves to situations where the spirit of adultery can snag you. Don't surround yourself with adulterous people. Don't buy into entertainment where adultery or fornication are treated with anything other than a biblical attitude. Does this sound like narrow-minded fundamentalism? I cannot help it if it does. The heart of God is too clear on this. And let me say that pastors and elders are not immune in this area. You, the sheep, need to pray for us in this too. Satan loves every opportunity he can find to exploit a Christian leader's vulnerability.

I wonder if you have ever wondered WHY the Scripture, why *the Lord* is so adamant about this matter... Your flesh may think, *Surely a little fling once in a while, or even just once in my life, couldn't hurt.* And your flesh may take it a step further: *It might even ENHANCE my marriage some.* Well, if you hear that voice, dear ones, know that it is lying. You see, God has given us the sexual side to ourselves for a reason. Sex is not a bad thing. It is a wonderfully good thing. And it was God who invented it. But he invented it for a specific reason and purpose: to knit two people together in the covenant of love and to BOND them to each other for life. He wanted the bonding to really make an impression so he wired us so that the bonding process is a whole lot of fun--so much fun, in fact, that nothing else can quite match it. He made the bonding process a mystical thing, I think, too. And it defies really understanding all of it, although the secular media and academic community would have us think that a man and his wife making love is no different than two copulating ants; just a different species...

Yes, sexuality is part of all life but with man it is special. Adam was given Eve and when he first saw her he said *Wow!* There was emotion there. There was an intelligent recognition that God had just given him something incredible. And something JUST FOR HIM.

Well, God gave Eve to Adam. He gives each husband one wife and each wife one husband and He has the same kind of singular relationship with us. He has promised to never leave or forsake us. He has promised to never grow tired of us or to break even one of his promises. It is His nature to be faithful and He wants us who claim to be His children by adoption to be like Him. We sing it, dear ones, usually every week. Almost every Sunday there is some song we sing which cries out for Him to make us more like He is. Well, dear ones, He is always faithful and He delights in His own faithfulness. I think because of that we can allow ourselves a little pride maybe in those weeks or months (years?) when we really can say we've been completely faithful to our spouses. Not pride in a fleshly way, but joyful and thankful pride in being LIKE our God whom we love. I'm not like this all the time. But I want to be.

This morning we've sung, *They'll Know We Are Christians By Our Love*. I don't think I've ever applied these lyrics to the family before, but they seem to fit. And each month when we celebrate the Lord's Table we should include our family life in the preparation stage.

The seventh commandment can be called the Law of Loyal Love. It was not meant as a killjoy. It was meant as a joy-preserving safeguard. Adultery only breeds misery and more misery. It is invariably destructive. God only wants you and I to be preserved from that kind of misery. He wants only the best for us; isn't He wonderful?

Malachi 2:13-16

And this is another thing you do:
you cover the altar of the Lord with tears, with
weeping and groaning, because He no longer
regards the offering or accepts it with favor from
your hand. Yet you say, "For what reason?"

-- Because the Lord has been a witness between you
and the wife of your youth, against whom you have
dealt **treacherously**, though she is your
companion and your wife by covenant.

But not one has done so who has a remnant of the
Spirit. And what did that one do while he was
seeking a godly offspring? Take heed, then, to your
spirit, and let no one deal **treacherously**
against the wife of your youth.

"For I hate divorce" says the Lord, the God of Israel,
"and him who covers his garment with wrong"
says the Lord of hosts.

So take heed to your spirit,
that you do not deal **treacherously**...

DARTMOUTH BIBLE NOTES

FROM THE TEACHING MINISTRIES OF
DARTMOUTH BIBLE CHURCH



Series: The Ten Commandments

Scripture: Exodus 20:15; Acts 20:35; Ephesians 4:28

Neil C. Damgaard, Th.M.

Lesson 10 October 24th, 1993

The Opposite of Stealing (The Eighth Commandment)

Introduction One of the reasons I love the Bible is because it so clearly reveals the heart of God. As a Christian I tend to go around saying "I want to know the Lord better" and I tend to sing songs about that, too. Well, a big part of getting to know the Lord is to gain understanding about His heart, about what is really important to *Him*, don't you think? And the Bible makes it clear about what is important to Him.

When Renée and I were dating in college, we were getting to know each other. We spent long hours just becoming friends and gaining respect for each other. In the process I learned that pets were important to her. I had grown up with the occasional pet here and one there, but they were never *important* to me. But as I got to know her, I slowly realized that animals are a real love of hers. She got to know me that music was a real "first-love" of mine.

I'm not aware of anything taught in the Bible that God is only casually interested in--but it tells us what makes His heart swell with excitement and what *really gives Him joy*. The Scripture doesn't confuse us; if we read our Bibles and if we memorize the Scripture we get a clear picture about the *heartbeat* of God. And one of the things that comes across crystal clear in Scripture--whether it's the OT or the NT--is that God gets real excited about JUSTICE. He is concerned that there is justice on a national level, on a local level and just between individual people. And in the ancient world the justice system within the various ancient nations was much different than we see in America today.

When *Yhwh* gave to Moses the Ten Commandments He intended for Moses to transmit them to Israel. Israel was God's sovereignly chosen people and it was to ~~THEM~~ that He gave His law. And so, the Ten Commandments were intended to have a *civil* application. The eighth commandment was meant for a thing to help govern Israel's society as well as for a thing to manage an individual Israelite's

morality. The problem is that people in all societies and cultures sometimes want something which belongs to someone else!

Now *stealing* as the Bible has it, means the illegitimate acquisition of property or assets. It means taking something which does not belong to you. It was very important to God that His people shouldn't do this. The problem is that for some reason people are often *not content* with what they have. They want more and that wanting can become such a lust that they will violate someone else and take what they have. Have you ever been robbed? There is a unique feeling with being robbed. In 1978 Renée and I had our apartment broken into twice and nearly everything of value that we owned was stolen. The police told me they knew who did it but that there wasn't anything they could do about it. In 1985 our church here was broken into three times and nearly everything of value *we had* was carted off. It gave me a unique feeling of violation. You feel like *Why me? How could someone do that to me? What audacity!*

I The Bible gives several means of *legitimately* acquiring property though. The first is through *diligent labor*. We read in Ephesians 4:28 about this. There are really no shortcuts to just working hard for your pay and benefits. And part of the labor that we do is to enable ourselves to be in a position to help other people who have need. This is what Paul said, and he said that it is good to *perform with his hands what is good*.

II In the parable of the talents that Jesus told (Matthew 25:14-30) Jesus gave His approval of the wise investor. Acquiring property and assets through wise trading, bartering and investing is legitimate.

III A third biblically approved means of acquisition is through faithful prayer. There are times when you have a genuine need and you cannot produce that need yourself. So you humbly ask the Lord to provide that need, and He will. And sometimes those needs arrive just in the nick of time!

But GETTING by taking from another person, in any fashion is stealing. God told Israel *no stealing*. And once again, it could read "no stealing--period." It is a spiritual issue, and you and I need to commit ourselves to learning that this is very important to God!

Now, I do not think that anyone here today would disagree with the principle here. It is the *fine-tuning* and *application* of this where we get nervous. We have funny ways of EXEMPTING ourselves in certain areas. We want to avoid paying ten or twelve dollars for a Christian tape or CD and so we make a bootleg copy and don't even wince at doing it. We rationalize it by saying, "it doesn't cost them anything." We don't want to pay a hundred dollars for a piece of computer software, and anyway--who will ever know if I just *dupe it over to a floppy?* And anyway--"those

software companies are rolling in the dough!" We see that the supply closet at the office is well stocked and we figure, "they'll not miss a single ream of paper..."

This is all to say that we would never just *blatantly* take something, outright. But let's not acquit ourselves of that too quickly. I think many of us are quite capable of just taking something with little or no rationalizing it at all. That's blunt, I know. But the seeds of sin run deep sometimes and just taking something for no other reason than "I want it" is not uncommon today, even in churches. The Scripture is full of examples of just-blatant-stealing, without any sophisticated rationalizations. Nathan the prophet confronted King David with the sin of stealing another man's wife. Malachi the prophet confronted Israel as a whole nation of robbing God by not paying their tithes. In 2 Kings 5 we have an interesting story of a man named *Gehazi* who was the servant of Elisha the prophet. Through trickery he rooked Naaman the Aramean out of both money *and* clothing. And he gets leprosy for the trouble...

But whatever the reason, let's be absolutely clear: taking something or acquiring something in any illegitimate fashion at all is sin. It offends our holy God, it hardens our hearts, and it injures other people. Won't you open your hearts to how the Holy Spirit would speak this commandment to you today?

Today I want now to look at something Jesus said, the passage we read this morning earlier. Just one verse, and one which is especially interesting because it contains a saying of Jesus which is *not* recorded in any of the four Gospels. It is in the transcript of Paul's farewell message to the Ephesian elders where Paul quotes the Lord Jesus with a very special "agrapha." We do not know where Paul heard this saying (there were many being passed around) but it was a particularly precious one to him, *It is more blessed* [happy] *to give than to receive* (Acts 20:35c).

It may be money, it may be property, it may be books or tapes, it may be equipment, it may be time--but rather than *taking* we ought to be looking for ways to give.

I think it's funny how many ethnic groups I hear who brag about being tight. The Irish are supposed to be tight, but no tighter than a good Scotsman. I've heard around here a lot of people call an old New Bedford woman a "Hetty Green." And of course, the Jews are thought of--for some reason--as being uniquely tight. My grandfather was a Danish immigrant and supposedly there was none tighter than old *Skor Damgaard*. But I haven't yet heard anyone claim that their particular ethnic group was generous by nature, have you?

But Christians are supposed to be that way, because Jesus was that way. He SAID you will be happier if you become the kind of person who gives things away than the kind of person who takes things away. I think that people who have lots

and lots of stuff are usually pretty unhappy people. And God just seems to bless (on the other hand) the kind of person who is looking for ways to help those in need.

And when it comes to that part of the verse in Acts 20 where Paul told those Ephesian elders, *I showed you that by working hard...you must help the weak* and I see all those people buying lottery tickets, I'm saying, "that's ROBBING the weak." Most lottery tickets are not bought by wealthy, comfortable people. They are bought by poor people who can ill afford to buy those tickets. And when I think of the way our government sets folks up to deprive their families of money because of the lottery, it breaks my heart. Let me tell you something: you've got a better chance of being hit by lightning than hitting the Megabucks. And if you just play the "little cards" hoping to win \$50 or \$100 think about all those cards you see in the gutter and in the parking lots. Who's making the money there? There is something fundamentally wrong and unbiblical with get-rich-quick thinking. It's not just that it's *unlikely*--it is that it is acquiring property *illegitimately*. Think about it, dear ones and pray about it.

When you read the OT you can pretty easily see that the Law of Moses wasn't meant to keep people from pleasure. It was meant to provide the legal means whereby there would be JUSTICE and fairness. The Ten Commandments reveal God's loving heart for God's people and His desire to protect them and us today too from greed and injustice. If we would be Bible-believers than we would be people more interested in giving than in getting and taking. That's the way Jesus was and may we be that reflection of Him that folks on the outside would see it and hunger for Him by what they see in our lives...

Ephesians 4:28

LET HIM WHO STEALS
STEAL NO LONGER; BUT
RATHER LET HIM LABOR,
PERFORMING WITH HIS
OWN HANDS WHAT IS
GOOD, IN ORDER THAT HE
MAY HAVE SOMETHING
TO SHARE WITH HIM WHO
HAS NEED...



Legitimate Acquisition

- 1. Diligent labor**
- 2. Honorable &
wise investment,
trading**
- 3. faithful prayer**

DARTMOUTH BIBLE NOTES

FROM THE TEACHING MINISTRIES OF
DARTMOUTH BIBLE CHURCH



Series: The Ten Commandments
Scripture: Exodus 20:16; Ephesians 4:25-32

Neil C. Damgaard, Th.M.
Lesson 11 November 7th, 1993

Speaking the Truth in Love (The Ninth Commandment)

Introduction One of my favorite films was a film called *The Verdict* which had Paul Newman as a kind of broken down lawyer; an ambulance-chaser guy, who latches on to a medical malpractice case. A woman had become a mental vegetable because of an anesthesiology malfunction, or so the case opened. Lawyer Newman, however, discovers that what had really happened was that when the patient had been admitted to the hospital and questioned as to the last time she had eaten, she had really said "1 hour before" when the doctor had instructed the nurse to change the "1" to a "9" in order to cover his mistake. She had vomited and then was asphyxiated while under the anesthesia. All through the film you're feeling sorry for Attorney Paul Newman until it is revealed that the doctor had lied. It was a great film!

But doctors are not alone in their occasional compulsion to lie to cover up. Lawyers do it. Car sales people do it. Presidents do it. Preachers do it. When I was planning to attend seminary the church in which I was a staff pastor began to interview applicants to become my replacement. One fellow, who was in the church already, applied, and put as references on his resumé the names of Dr. Francis Schaffer, Dr. R.C. Sproul and Josh McDowell. But when each of the three were contacted not one of them said they knew the applicant. This was difficult because the church was ready to hire than man--he had a very charismatic personality and was in possession of striking ministry gifts.

It's funny *why* we lie. My counseling professor (Dr. Paul Meier) in seminary always made a big deal out of the idea "we don't want to see the truth about ourselves"--in fact some times we'll avoid it at great expense and trouble, so he would often say. I think it's likely true. And we will invent all kinds of sophisticated deception or lies to keep from seeing the truth about ourselves, or to keep *others* from learning it. I have been going to get weighed every week or two for about five months. I do it because the accountability is something I need but I don't mind telling you I hate doing it because there is no way to fool the scale. It tells the truth.

When the truth is one direction I feel good. When it's in the other direction...well, it takes courage to look at the truth. And people will lie up one side and down the other to distort their image of themselves.

From a Christian angle we are talking about the KIND of person you and I are. And being an honest person and speaking truthfully about things is the positive side of the ninth commandment. The commandment reads (from Exodus 20:16) *You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.* Turn please in your Bible now to Ephesians where we have had our Scripture reading today: in 4:25-32 is a whole argument that in a true Christian there is a putting aside of the old life and an intentional putting on of the new life. One place this shows up is in how we SPEAK. And today the issue is the amount of *truthfulness* we use. God has plainly told the Israelites and us too, that *untruthfulness* of any kind is a sin. It's a part of the fallenness of this world--little children don't usually have to be taught to lie, they just figure it out on their own sooner or later.

Really this message today has a simple strategy. You need to understand what it is that God is forbidding. And you need to see that the opposite of untruthfulness is *truthfulness*. It is the ninth commandment that God gave to Moses.

It comes before protecting the environment.
It comes before racial equalization.
It is more basic than Thou Shalt Not Smoke Cigars.
It comes before You Shall Pay Tithes.

Four Kinds of Untruthfulness It is very important to the Lord that you and I become people of truthfulness, even if the truthfulness is painful. It is the way the Lord Jesus was and His plan is for you and I to reflect the Lord Jesus and to gradually acquire HIS nature, even as we gradually shed the *old* nature. So we need to know what to avoid; or, what to begin praying that the Holy Spirit would give us the desire and the power to *purge* from our lives if these are present...

1. **Lying.** This is to deliberately say something which is false or to deliberately NOT acknowledge something which you know to be true. Lying goes all the way back to the Garden of Eden when Satan called *God* a liar, and right there in the beginning demonstrated that he, Satan, is the father of lies. We are not immune from this. To say something either about somebody else or about yourself which is NOT TRUE is sin; pure and simple.
2. **Distortion.** This is twisting the truth for our own purposes and it is a subtle form of lying. It is so easy to destroy someone else's reputation by distorting their words. We hear this all the time on the radio as people quote one another and twist meanings and misrepresent the "quotee." I must admit to you that I am susceptible to this one. I am far less likely to out-and-out lie as

I am to look for ways to distort what someone said to make me look good.

3. Exaggeration. In our marriages one of the most common and yet problematic issues is how we tend to exaggerate. "You *never* take out the garbage. Your mother *always* criticizes my driving. You *never* do anything nice for me." Or inflating an accomplishment to make yourself look good. Or embellishing someone else's failure to make them look a little worse.
4. Silence. In Leviticus 5:1 we read, *Now if a person sins after he hears a public adjuration to testify, when he is a witness, whether he has seen or otherwise known, IF HE DOES NOT TELL IT, then he will bear his guilt.* A cowardly or careless or irresponsible *silence* can be as senseless a crime as false and lying speech. One of the scariest situations we read about in the N.T. is in Acts 5 where Ananias and Saphira are convicted and condemned to death for the sin of "lying to the Holy Spirit." God does not take lying, in any form, lightly.

Speaking the Truth in Love But the opposite of a lying spirit is the practice of *speaking the truth in love* as Paul tells us to do in Ephesians 4:15. It is two things he says: 1) speak the truth; 2) do it in love. Both are necessary.

It sometimes takes courage to say something which is true. But we must do it. If in your private affairs or in your relationship with folks in the church you and I need to say what is true. That is not always just saying the *bad stuff* that's true, either. I try to look for ways to honestly affirm people and say both to them and to others the good things they are doing and in detail. But there are times also when we must confront each other with a truth that is painful, that maybe we don't *want* to see. Once in a while one of you will confront me with something that you believe to be true and you will say it. You *need* to say it. But dear ones that brings us to the second part of what Paul said, to do it in love.

That means with sincerity and good timing and with gentleness. If you approach me with something hard that you have prayed about and you're not just being reactionary about it, I will be much more inclined to listen if you do it in a careful way. It says in Proverbs that *a gentle answer turns away wrath*. It is true. And if I know that generally you have my best interests at heart and that you are not just a hostile person or untrusting, then I will likely listen to the thing.

Speaking the truth in love--that's what we are to do. The truth hurts sometimes but we need it. I need you to help me see the truth and you need me to help you.

Lying is something that *never* accomplishes God's purposes. He will never bless it. But He will always bless the person who so hungers after pleasing Him and so hungers to *be like* the Lord Jesus that he is willing to entrust things--even to tell the truth--unto Him.

Untruthfulness (the 9th comm.)

Lying ✗

Distortion ✗

Exaggeration ✗

Silence ✗

rather ✓

{ "speaking the truth
in love" }

DARTMOUTH BIBLE NOTES

FROM THE TEACHING MINISTRIES OF
DARTMOUTH BIBLE CHURCH



Series: The Ten Commandments
Scripture: Exodus 20:17

Neil C. Damgaard, Th.M.
Lesson 12 November 14th, 1993

You've Got it; I Want it (The Tenth Commandment)

Introduction For more years than I can remember I have wanted a motorcycle. I first rode one in Duluth, MN in the summer of 1967. It was a Honda 50, and a friend of mine showed me how to tear it down and put it back together again. In college I had opportunity to ride another friend's bike, a little bigger than the Honda 50 and he gave me some lessons. After I got married my brothers in law always had bikes it seemed in those early years, anyway. And I finally got a broken down Honda 175 that had been sitting out in the rain with no head on it (exposing the cylinders) for two years. Yet another friend and I worked on that bike for a year before we finally got it going, and then it was time to go to seminary and so I gave it to him never having gone to get my license. One of my favorite pictures of my Dad is one with him on an Indian in 1942 while he was in the Army, leaning off to one side, looking "bad." My brother-in-law Morley bought a GoldWing in 1980, I think, and I got to ride it a couple of times. Now *there's* a bike! Owning and operating a *bone fide* bike is something that has eluded me all this time. I look at the hogs other people ride, and I just pine after them. But maybe the Lord has just been protecting me. Oh sure, I've heard the lecture often enough: "Why do you want a *motorcycle*? They're totally impractical! You can't haul anything with them. You can't ride in the rain. They're so dangerous, it's ridiculous. Besides which--a self-respecting *pastor* would never be caught on one." I don't know...just something I've always wanted. I've gone through the need to get some serious stereo gear, and accomplished it. There was the drive to own a home and we accomplished that. I've owned a Cadillac, a '65 Thunderbird. But this bike thing hasn't happened (yet) and it is the passion to possess one which can so easily captivate.

The passion to possess. Probably everybody has something which ignites within them some kind of passion to possess. Now, the tenth commandment has probably received the least attention of all the commandments. Many people would probably consider this commandment of God a "throw-away" one. They figure that if they can make some progress with the first nine they're doing real good, so let's just not worry too much about this one--seems kind of petty, anyway, they might

think. When actually, most of us are more guilty of coveting than any of the other sins condemned in the Ten Commandments. I think it's possible that we might indulge the passion to possess more than we indulge any other sin. We're going to talk about this today and I hope you will see that the passion to possess goes further than just wanting more *things*. This commandment gets down to the core of our being--and it quietly echoes the very *first* commandment, *You shall have no other God's before Me.*

You know, I don't think there was ever a time in any civilization when folks were pushed more to possess than they are now. Marketing-research is a billion-dollar-a-year business. Thousands of people across the country spend forty hours/week designing ways to get us to buy things. They use music, slogans, sights, sounds and colors to inflame our passion to possess. They attempt to stimulate fear, nostalgia, pride, sexual arousal, jealousy or some other intense emotion. Their goal is to get us to suspend any feelings of self-control just long enough for us to decide that we *must have* their product. In short, they're trying to make us *covet*. But advertisers are not the only ones guilty of tempting us. Managers in businesses sometimes dangle attractive inducements in front of us, to increase our output. Some sales organizations even encourage their people to hang color pictures of their dream possessions on their refrigerator or bulletin board or bathroom mirror, to motivate them to sell more. I have been quietly uneasy for a lot of years with the saccharin-sweet approach of pyramid-sales recruiting. They will often camp on their *Christian* ethics and parade Bible verses around and the like. Now, not all incentive programs are bad. But when you get down to it, we are very susceptible to *covetousness*.

Now not all coveting is always wrong. The Hebrew word for "covet" is simply the word *hamad* which is really a neutral word just meaning "to desire" or "to take pleasure in." It isn't that I might *desire* a thing in and of itself that is wrong. Before I got married I very much desired to get married. Before I found this church I very much desire to *become* the pastor of a church. *Desiring* those things isn't wrong. What IS wrong is if my desire to possess something causes me to go after something to which I have no right. That very likely might be something which *somebody else* already has. And this can become an obsession, of sorts, so that all reason vanishes--I MUST have it!

Before we go any further with this, let's put stress on what the writer to the Hebrews said in the NT. *Let your character be free from the love of money BEING CONTENT WITH WHAT YOU HAVE for He Himself has said, 'I will never desert you nor will I ever forsake you.'* This is a wonderful verse and it is the antidote to wanting something you should NOT have or that somebody else already has. This verse uses an interesting word, the word character. We should be concerned about our character and the kind of character we are modeling for our children. This writer tells us to allow our character to be free from loving money. He does *not* say

that we should not have any money. He says we should not have money as our number one passion in life. Instead we need to be CONTENT with what we have and actually, it is a FAITH issue--God has promised to be with us and to provide what we need. He's right there, and He cares. He said so to Moses, and this writer to the Hebrews carries the promise right over to New Testament Christians.

If we're walking closely with Him, He will protect you and me from developing a covetous, greedy, lustful heart. If we do not, we will likely fall prey to covetousness in many ways. It might be some material possession or it might be someone else's spouse or someone else's job or someone else's house. We have a new word in our vocabulary in the past ten years or so (maybe even more recently): it is the word "upgrade." Now, think about that... Sometimes I think it is a needed word. When information becomes stale we do need to upgrade it. But it has become a nice, sterile word for *coveting* in many applications today. DOS 3.3 is not enough. I need 4.1 and then 5.0 and then 6.0 and now 6.2. I *need* these things--sure they're 50 bucks every time I "upgrade."

One reason why we tend to covet possessions is because we get the idea that we have a sort of cosmic right to an EQUAL share of the good things in life. This makes no sense, but we believe it. If Mr. Jones has a new car, then I am entitled to one. If Susie Smith's parents left her a hundred thousand dollars then MY parents ought to do the same thing for me.

But this makes no sense. Nowhere in Scripture has God ever said everyone has a cosmic right to an equal share of everything. How would you feel if you were averaged out with the world's two billion *starving* people? We're wanting to be averaged UP and not down.

We also might covet because we fall into the age-old trap in starting to believe that happiness comes from the outside in, rather than the inside out. If I can dress this body up, in clothes or a car or a house THEN I'll be happy! But that won't cut it. Our *condition* is far too deep and advanced to be *treatable* from the outside. Only in the Lord; only by developing your character in Christ can you and I find real contentment.

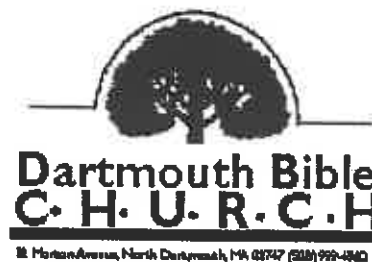
Here's a healthy perspective on possessions and assets: *We have brought nothing into the world, so we cannot take anything out of it either (1 Timothy 6:7)*. It is good to not get all caught up in thinking everybody: God, my folks, the church, the government--OWE me something. They do not. And to WIN the battle over coveting is to put our *needs* in proper perspective and to diminish our *wants* down to a manageable level. Coveting is not only sin, it is stupid. It is a wasteful investment of your energies and your thought life because it can never be fully satisfied. I don't think it's wrong to want a motorcycle--but if I let it cloud my judgment; or my wallet or other priorities, it's just a lust. It's just coveting. The Holy Spirit is working to

create more and more dependance on the Lord in my life. And in so doing He creates more faith in me and less coveting. It is His plan for my life and it is His plan for your life.

You have a good opportunity here today to make a decision about this. You can decide right here that you want more of God's peace and contentment. You can decide that you want less lusting and coveting and greed. It's yours and my decision. The Lord will honor it, no doubt about it! What do you think?

DARTMOUTH BIBLE NOTES

FROM THE TEACHING MINISTRIES OF
DARTMOUTH BIBLE CHURCH



Series: The Ten Commandments

Scripture: Titus 3:1-8

Neil C. Damgaard, Th.M.

Lesson 13 November 21st, 1993

The Classic Tension of Law and Grace

Introduction If someone came to you with a problem, how would you respond to him? Let's say the problem is like this: he is a Christian and you can tell that he has a basic desire to please God. He's not ignorant about the Bible and he knows pretty much what's right and what's wrong. But he has a problem that he can't seem to lick. It's a *hunger*, a compulsion to do this thing. He's ashamed of it; he hides it; he feels guilty about it. When he falls into it he feels great sorrow after--he's not hardened yet to the point that his conscience has been silenced--but he still struggles with it; frequently. Let's put a name on this problem--let's call it gambling, say, just to have a face on it. And this brother has come to you, humble, honest and candid, wanting your advice or counsel with this gambling habit. How would you respond? (You may respond by telling him to "call the pastor" but he may or may not be available--and besides which, the Bible says that pastors are given to the church to equip *them* to do the work of the ministry[Eph. 4]).

If you're like many people your response would likely fall into one of two categories: condemnation or compassion. Your reaction (in your heart, at least) would probably be either to tell him the error of his ways, to warn him of where he's headed, and condemn him for the sad consequences. OR your reaction (in your heart, at least) might be one of sympathy. You would feel the pain and blackness of the man, trapped in a vicious habit of sin. You would console him, pray for him and maybe even commit yourself to work with him and encourage him. One reaction or the other. It is the classic tension of "law and grace." Many Christians struggle with gravitating one way or the other.

We have come to the last message in this series on the Ten Commandments. The Ten Commandments as a whole, is the figurehead or we might say the "hood ornament" of the whole Law of God. They are recorded in Exodus 20 which tells us of how Moses originally received them, and then they are repeated, expanded and augmented in the Books of Leviticus and Deuteronomy. The whole first five books of the Bible are called together the Law, the "Torah." We have learned the ten basic commands of God to Israel and we take it, to us as well. The only one of the ten not specifically repeated in the New Testament is the fourth, relating to the Sabbath Day. But as we have said, even there we see an important principle of taking a Sabbath rest each week. The Ten Commandments are something sadly missing in today's society. They have been supposedly superseded and

replaced by more enlightened principles, at least as today's thinkers would like us to believe. But we honor them still and we wish to know then and beyond that to keep them.

There are a couple of principles we need to review:

1. It is not just outward duty that the commandments aim at. It is having a *heart* which beats so fervently for Christ that we wish to have God's Law *inscribed* on our hearts. We are striving to become *quietly* sanctified and *privately* more and more dedicated to Christ. We seek to change slowly from the inside-out, with each passing year evidencing to ME PRIVATELY that my heart is slowly becoming more dedicated to Jesus. Outward duty and obedience is genuine when it comes from the *private* desire to be like Jesus.
2. Jesus summarized all the commandments in two: loving God with every resource in my possession; and therefore loving the guy next to you with at least the same devotion as I watch out for myself with!

But we still have this *tension* between God's Law and the *other* great idea in the Bible, God's grace. We would tell people of His law--boy if ever there was a time when folks were confused about what is right and what is not, it is now-- and because we are *saved* sinners, we would tell them also of His free and matchless grace. There are two truths standing in front of us: God is holy and His Law reflects His holiness. And, He is compassionate, even as He spoke through Isaiah, *therefore the Lord longs to be gracious to you, and therefore He waits on high to have compassion on you...* (Isaiah 30:18a). The tendency is to tip the scales one way or the other though. It is not that God is confused about Himself. His attributes are in perfect balance. But believers in Jesus Christ have struggled with how WE are supposed to be--all the way back to the time of the Apostle Paul!

We see believers who are so quick to quote the Law, and that can *mutate* into a harsh, condemning kind of spirit that doesn't look or seem like Jesus Christ at all. On the other hand other believers are *so accepting* and tender-hearted that they make it look like Jesus has no absolute standards whatsoever, that there is *hardly anything* which is truly sinful and that compulsive behaviors are destructive maybe, but not an offense to God.

The tension is ancient. In the Book of Galatians, Paul is wrestling with this problem. Now I believe that the Apostle Paul had it *down* on this tension. He was not a perfect man, nor were any other of the apostles. But on this, Paul had it right. The letter to the Galatians is an emotional letter. He is watching the Galatian churches, for who he has deep affections and feelings--(Galatia was practically "next door" to his home of Tarsus)--gravitate towards the Law side, so badly that they had begun to distort the Gospel of Christ itself. And the leaders of these churches were being swayed by a sect, a *denomination* we might say, of quasi-Christians called the "Judaizers" who insisted that before a person could become a Christian, he had to become a faithful law-keeping Jew first. Paul was not there. He was elsewhere and you know how frustrating it can be to know of a problem with someone that you *can't get to*. So he wrote this letter. It is probably the first of all his letters which we have persevered for us in the N.T.

In 2:19 of Galatians, we read that Paul says he had *died to the Law*. As he looked at the Ten Commandments (and others) he knew he could not keep them enough to please God. In 3:11 he wrote that *that no one is justified by the Law before God*. So Christ's death must be depended upon completely to fully satisfy the holiness of God. Paul was depending on that! Christ died, and so therefore so did Paul believe that *he did too*. (That, by the way, is all baptism demonstrates). In giving in to Christ's vicarious (substitutionary) satisfaction of the Law, Paul was now freed to "live for God." And it is *only then* that a person can live for God, can please God, can really walk with God. That happens by faith and by faith alone. Nowhere did he say it more clearly than he did to Titus: *He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit (Titus 3:5)*.

By the way, please note that word "regeneration" there (*παλιγγενεσίας* in the Greek). That means to be generated a second time. You see, we did not make up the idea of being born a second time, of being "born again." It comes from Paul and from Peter and from Jesus. *They* invented it!

Now that is how we, like Paul, must deal with the Law of a holy God. We cannot ignore it as the world says. We cannot keep it as the flesh says. We cannot despair of it as Satan says. We must flee to the One, the *only* One who could keep it and keep it entirely, to Jesus.

And now as Christians, we bathe ourselves in and gorge ourselves with His grace. It is by His grace that HE has been motivated to rescue us and all who will flee to Christ. It is by His grace that HE has been motivated to give us His Holy Spirit. I'm not sure how one should feel about this, but I think probably only a very *few* of us would be interested in religion at all if it were just a religion of Law. Without a God Who is loving and compassionate and merciful and patient; without a God of *grace*; we would not seek Him even IF we knew that He was the only God. We revel in the knowledge of His kindness towards us. Do we not?

Law without grace is terror. Grace without the Law is license. You cannot have one without the other, but because we are not naturally balanced--at least not without great effort--we tend to gravitate one way or the other. Let me put it another way--many Christians (I won't say all) tend to either be hard-nosed or they tend to be too free. They tend to be legalistic or they tend toward lawlessness. And this comes up in many, many areas.

Who should be the leaders in the church? How about a person that has only been married once, but smokes cigarettes? How about a person that had an affair one time? How about a person that is a real good communicator and teacher but is undisciplined and irresponsible with his money? Where do you draw the lines for church leadership?

Or, how about church membership? Our *Constitution and By-Laws* state that if a person is a member and they stop attending for months on end without good reason, they could lose their membership status. They can't lose their salvation, but their membership as an official member. Membership has to

mean something. But is that mechanism legalistic?

What about tithing? Some churches are quite proud of the fact that they teach tithing and they expect it. I think that borders on being legalistic. But we sometimes go so far the *other* way and place NO expectations before our people and they do not worship God hardly at all with their money.

The answer to the classic tension between Law and grace is somewhere in the middle. Or, actually there is *no* final answer. You and I will face this tension for the rest of our lives. We must simply accept that it is one of the paradoxes of the Christian life and we will always be pulled towards one extreme or another. It is a harsh reality of the Christian life. But we CAN deal with it. You can learn to have standards and convictions and to hold to them. But you can learn to be a gracious person too. You can learn to cultivate true righteousness in your own heart--privately and quietly--and on the *outside* you are gracious and kind and patient and all the other fruits of the Spirit that Paul lists in Galatians 5. We get into trouble when we take *ourselves* too seriously, I think. Or, when we don't take God's Word--all of it; the Ten Commandments included--*seriously enough*.

Dear ones, here's my final summary: Open your hearts to the Spirit to create the righteousness of Jesus in your heart; in your mind; in how you handle your body, your money, your time, and every resource you have at your disposal. Allow the Holy Spirit to cultivate *holiness* in you. But allow Him to do it on HIS SCHEDULE in everyone else too. That may not exactly be *your* schedule. We need Law and we need grace. We need grace to get *into* the kingdom, and we need Law to live LIKE true subjects of the King.

We will never fully get this together, I do not think. We must accept the reality that we tend to drift towards one extreme or the other. And we must pray our hearts out each week and each year to stay somewhere near the middle. Jesus knew the Law, dear ones, don't you think? He knew *all* the Laws; He understood every detail and every implication. And He *kept* every Law that was a true law of God. But was ever there a man more gracious and kind and patient?

I hope this series has been helpful for you. My desire is that we should be burdened for holiness--each of us as individuals--but that we should be a "kinder, gentler" church too. If anyone perceives us as a threat it should be as a threat to wickedness by our example and by our simple lifestyles. May the Lord of grace who is also the Lawgiver grant us the balance. And I believe He shall as we seek Him, as we teach His Word and as we work at building Biblical relationships.

Regeneration

Titus 3:5

παλιγγενεσιας

pali-ggenesias

to be generated a
second time

to be "born again"

See also John 3
and 1 Peter 1

The Ten Commandments

2 summarizing principles



1. AIMED at your heart



2. SUMMED UP by Jesus

**a. love God with *all* of
every resource**

**b. love neighbor with
AT LEAST as
much care as you
give yourself**