

SELECTED WRITINGS: BOOK VI

Keeping the Commandments: 6<sup>th</sup> thru 10<sup>th</sup>



*THE  
EVERLASTING  
GOSPEL*

I AM THE WAY, THE TRUTH,  
AND THE LIFE  
JOHN 14:6

The Truth About God

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\*Shaded section credited to Ellen White.

## MIRACULOUS POWERS

The following is related in the Life of Mrs. Hester Ann Rogers:

"November 29, 1785. A lady of genteel appearance, whom I had not seen before, requested to speak with me. I found she had come secretly to hear preaching for some months, and was under deep awakenings. Her husband is a man of fortune, but a professed infidel; believes in neither God, devil, heaven, nor hell; mocks at the Scriptures, especially the New Testament; and will neither attend any place of public worship himself, nor suffer her to do so. And what added to her affliction, his bad state of health determined him to go to live in France. She cried, 'What will become of me there? No means of grace; no friend to fly to; in a country of idolaters abroad, and infidels at home; my sinful heart and the temptations of Satan to struggle with; I shall lose all my good desires, and my poor soul will be ruined.'

"I asked, Is there no way to prevent this? She answered, No. I said, But the Lord can prevent it; and if not for his glory, he will. 'Ha!' said she, I fear nothing can prevent; the carriage is preparing, and the time is fixed.' I replied, 'Only put the whole into the Lord's hand, and you are safe. Trust in God, and make it a matter of prayer; and if the journey be not for your good, though it come to the last hour, he will prevent it. Nay, if you should even set out, he can, by a thousand means, turn you back, and he will. Did he not suffer the three Hebrew children to be cast into the furnace? Yet the fire had no power to consume. Daniel was cast into the den; but the God you are called to trust, shut the lions' jaws. St. John was put into the cauldron of boiling oil; yet he received no harm. This God, who is the same yesterday, to-day, and forever, will prevent this journey if you put your trust in him; or he will make it a blessing to your soul.' I then went to prayer, and at parting, bid her pray much for her husband, and believe all things are possible with God.

"Some time after she called on me, and told me she had taken my advice and prayed for her husband who, a few nights ago had a remarkable dream, which much affected and astonished him. He thought he was giving orders to his coach maker about his new carriage, and more especially about one of the wheels; when the man turned about and said, in a very solemn manner, 'Sir, you need not trouble yourself about that wheel, for the Lord Jesus Christ has the whole management of it.' He was filled with surprise and awoke. I again commended her to God in prayer, and she returned home not a little comforted.

"A few days afterward, a note was sent to request public thanks to Almighty God for his power and love manifested in behalf of a person whose name is unknown. The messenger, calling on me at the same time, said, 'Thank God, this journey is prevented at last!' I asked, 'But how was this brought to pass?' She said, 'Only two days ago all was fixed for the journey; and on this day they were to set off. But the Lord afflicted the physician who advised them to go. And Mr. finding himself very poorly, called in another doctor, who assured him he could not undergo the journey, and that France is not a proper place for his constitution, and therefore all thoughts of going are at an end.

"O how my soul was filled with wonder, love, and praise! Who that considers the above, will not see omnipotence, love, and faithfulness exerted in answer to prayer? Who would not wish for such a Friend? Who would not love, serve, and confide in such a God? Who would not own he heareth prayer, and to him shall all flesh come? And how wonderful is such a dream of the Lord Jesus Christ by a man of such principles! Surely it was all of God, and to him alone is due all the glory."

SUMMARY

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## BIBLE STUDY

**"What advantage has the Jew? or what profit is there of circumcision? Much every way: chiefly, because that unto them were committed the oracles of God." Rom.3:1,2.**

THE entrance of the law is that grand event which, according to Rom.5, took place in the days of Moses. But Paul takes great care to show that this entrance of the law was not the commencement of its existence, nor the beginning of Man's obligation to obey it. He teaches us that the existence of death is proof that sin exists in the world. And he further instructs us that sin cannot be imputed to men, nor even exist itself, unless the law of God also exist. And thus the order of their existence is this: first, the law, as God's rule of right; second, sin, which is the transgression of that law; and third, death, which is the consequence of forfeiting life by sin.

The existence of death from the time of Adam proves that sin has existed for that whole period; and the existence of sin from the fall of Adam shows that the law of God did exist prior to that event. And what is more, the universal prevalence of death, not only from Abraham till Moses, but from thence to the time when death itself shall cease in the lake of fire, is absolute proof, 1. That sin has existed with all mankind in all ages. 2. That during all this time the law of God has been in full force, and all mankind have been under obligation to govern their lives by it.

The entrance of the law, then, was not the beginning of its existence. It was rather the entrance of the Lawgiver to assert his rightful authority, and to proclaim in person the precepts of his just law. It was the most majestic, grand, and awfully solemn, event in the annals of mankind. The God of Heaven descended with the thousands of his angels. The sight of his glory was like devouring fire; the trump of God sounded long, and waxed louder and louder, and then the Almighty spoke the ten precepts of his law. Deut.33:2; Ps.68:17; Ex.19:11,16-19; 24:17; 20:1-18. Nothing can ever equal this event until the Son of God shall descend in the glory of his Father, and the same trump of God be heard again by the inhabitants of the earth. Matt.16:27; 2Thess.1:7,8; 1Cor.15:52.

Such was the entrance of the law. Yet such was not and could not be the beginning of its authority. It is a law founded in the nature of things. It is simply an expression of the principles of right. It is the law of nature as written upon man's heart. Rom.2:13-15. Each duty enjoined in the law of God existed in man's uprightness, and in fact his uprightness consisted in his perfect conformity to these principles. Eccl.7:29; 12:13. But whatever may be said of the other nine precepts, the fourth commandment traces itself back to the creation of the heavens and the earth, and asserts its sacredness by reasons that are as old as the world. Ex.20:11.

The law of God is older than sin, its deadly antagonist. It is as extensive in its jurisdiction as the race of mankind in whose hearts it exists by nature, written by their Creator. But when the law of God entered in such majesty by the solemn proclamation of its great Author, it came directly to one people only. The voice of the trumpet must have been heard by other nations, perhaps by all mankind; the revelation of the Almighty in flaming fire must have been witnessed also by the nations of the world. Yet the voice of God was directly addressed to that people which he had delivered from Egyptian bondage by an outstretched hand. The Hebrew people were made the honored recipients of his perfect law. And this one fact has been urged against the law of God as though it were fatal to its authority. The law was given to the people of Israel; therefore it related

only to them. The Sabbath of the fourth commandment was given to Israel, therefore the Sabbath is only a Jewish institution. Such is the reasoning of many persons at the present day. Yet neither the law nor the Sabbath have in their nature one element of a Jewish character. The law defines with precision the duties man owes to God, and to his fellow-men. And these pertain, not to one nation, nor to one age, but to all mankind in every age of the world. The Sabbath, of right, pertains to all who owe their existence to the six days' work of creation.

But why came the law of God to one nation of mankind? The answer is short, direct and explicit. There was barely one nation that was loyal to the God of Heaven. All other nations had forgotten God, and were idolaters or atheists. The law of God entered to that nation alone which was loyal to him, while all others were left to their own blindness and folly.

The knowledge of the Sabbath and of the law of God is clearly traceable from Adam, the head of the human family, to Abraham, the friend of God. When we reach the time of Abraham we find circumcision first instituted by God. Gen.17:9-14; John 7:22. One principal design of this institution was to form a separating line between the family of Abraham and all the rest of the world. And why did God thus elect a single family, and give up all the rest of mankind? Was it because that he was the God of the Jews only, and not of the Gentiles also? Was he an Abrahamic, or Hebraic, or Jewish, God? It is certain that God was the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and the God of the Hebrews, or Israel. See Ex.3:6,18; 24:10. What occasioned this relation? A correct answer will readily solve the question under consideration in this discourse. God gave himself to one family; viz., that of Abraham. Now it was either because no other family of mankind owed allegiance to God, or else because that this family alone rendered obedience to him while all others worshiped false Gods. But nothing is more certain than that all nations were under solemn obligation to worship the God of Abraham and of the Hebrews. The jurisdiction of the Almighty, of right, extended over all men; but that

jurisdiction was acknowledged only by the family of Abraham. If this great fact be borne in mind we shall not find it difficult to understand why the oracles of God, and the Sabbath itself, were committed to this one people. The oracles of God are holy, spiritual, just and good. In their very nature they pertain to the whole family of man, for they define exactly the relations which exist between God and man; and man and his fellow-man. And so of the Sabbath institution. It is something designed of God to commemorate the creation of the heavens and the earth, and does, therefore, like every other part of God's law, pertain of right to all mankind. For the same reason that God gave himself to the Hebrew people, he gave them his law and his Sabbath.

But if all mankind needed the true God as much as the Hebrews, and if his law was the rule of right for the Gentiles as well as for the Israelites, and if the Sabbath was made for mankind at the beginning of our world, had God a right to confer such gifts upon one people and to leave all the rest of mankind to their own ways? Undoubtedly he had. There certainly is no injustice with God. But can his ways in this be justified at the bar of human reason? Let us see. It appears that twice God had attempted to maintain his worship with the human family as a whole. First, with the family of Adam; second, with the family of Noah. Each time the attempt ended in disastrous failure. The family of Adam were, during the antediluvian period, favored with wonderful blessings from God. Yet, at the end of that period, only eight persons remained his devout worshipers, who were saved in the ark, while all the others were drowned by the flood. Then God took the family of Noah as his heritage. But even the terrible lesson of the flood was, in a brief period, forgotten; and when we reach the time of Abraham, in the fourth century after that event, we find scarcely a righteous man, with the single exception of Abraham and those directly connected with him. There remained, therefore, only one of two things for the God of Heaven to do: either to suffer righteousness to be extinguished in the earth, or to take this one family and separate it



from the rest of mankind, and make them the depositaries of his law and his Sabbath, and take them to himself as his peculiar treasure.

This latter is exactly what he did. He therefore ordained circumcision to last during the period that the family of Abraham should remain as the sole depositaries of his law; and having thus set apart the family of Abraham, his friend, he gave to them his oracles. **"What advantage then hath the Jew? or what profit is there of circumcision? Much every way: chiefly, because that unto them were committed the oracles of God."** Rom.3:1, 2. God knew Abraham, that he would command his children and his household after him; and that they would keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment. Gen.18:19. The wisdom of God and the justice of God stand alike approved in the choice of Abraham's family to be the depositaries of his oracles, the guardians of his Sabbath, and the servants of his cause. It was not because these were the only people who ought to worship the Creator of the heaven and the earth, and to reverence his Sabbath, and to obey his oracles. Far from this. These duties rest upon reasons which make them incumbent upon all the human race. But God committed this treasure of divine truth to the family of Abraham because they alone were loyal to him. It was not to the dishonor of the truth, as though it were fit only for one small nation of earth, that it was given to the Hebrews. Rather it was to the shame of the idolatrous and atheistic nations of earth, that they were all passed by as unworthy of the sacred treasure which God gave to the people of his choice. The Hebrew people were honored with great honor in the divine treasure committed to them; but that sacred deposit was not rendered Jewish by their guardianship over it, nor proved thereby to be of no importance to the Gentile world. Thus much concerning the law of God in the hands of the Hebrew people. Let us now consider, in conclusion, the bearing of the law of God upon the sin of Adam and the death of Christ.

**"Moreover the law entered, that THE OFFENSE might abound."**

**Rom.5:20.** What is meant by this term, "*the offense*"? It is plain that Adam's sin is intended. See the language of the previous verses:

**Verse 12: "Wherefore as by one man [Adam] sin entered into the world."**

**Verse 14: "Not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression."**

**Verse 15: "But not as the offense [of Adam], so also is the free gift."**

**Verse 15: "For if through the offense of one [Adam] many be dead."**

**Verse 16: "And not as it was by one [Adam] that sinned."**

**Verse 16: "For the judgment was by one [Adam] to condemnation."**

**Verse 17: "For if by one man's offense," i.e., Adam's.**

**Verse 17: "Death reigned by one," Adam.**

**Verse 18: "By the offense of one," Adam.**

**Verse 19: "By one man's disobedience," i.e., that of Adam.**

**Verse 20: "The law entered, that the offense [of Adam] might abound."**

"*The offense*" spoken of in these verses is thus seen to be the transgression of Adam, which made sinners of all the human race. Before the second Adam comes to die, the law must enter, to show the greatness of the first Adam's transgression.

What is meant by the term, "**that the offense might abound**"? Did God send the law, in order that there might be more sin in the world? or that the awful guilt of sin might be revealed? Plainly he did not send his law to increase sin among men; for sin is that abominable thing which God hates. This is not the manner of causing the offense to abound. He caused the law to enter in order to reveal the exceeding sinfulness of sin. Let us compare several texts:

**Rom.3:20: "For by the law is the knowledge of sin."**

**5:20: "Moreover the law entered, that the offense might abound."**

**7:7: "I had not known sin, but by the law; for I had not known lust except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet."**

**7:13: "That sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful."**

These texts show the purpose of the law not to be the creation of sin, but the discovery of sin. It is not designed to increase the amount of sin, but to reveal the exceeding sinfulness of sin already existing. But how does the entrance of the law of God show the enormity of Adam's transgression?

1. It makes plain the fact that Adam sinned against the principles of the moral law. Its first great precept is the supreme love of God. Matt.22:36-38. And this kind of love is but another name for perfect obedience from the heart. 1John 5:3. This greatest of all the commandments, Adam certainly violated. The first of the ten lesser precepts of the law is the prohibition of other gods before the Lord. But the very motive set before Eve in the temptation was, that they themselves should be elevated to the rank of gods. It was, therefore, a most wicked revolt from their allegiance to God. If Adam had no hope of such a result from this sin, he certainly did violate this same precept in this very act of transgression; for he preferred the favor of his wife to the approbation of God. It was base ingratitude to God on the part of both. God was Adam's only father. Yet Adam dishonored this exalted Father by breaking his express command for the sake of Eve, his wife. Certainly it was a plain case of violating the eighth commandment. It is possible for a man to rob God. Mal.3:8,9. God gave to Adam every tree of the garden but one. This, by express command, God reserved to himself. Adam dared to take of this which he knew was withheld from him by the express precept of its rightful owner, who was also his own Creator. With Eve, certainly, and probably with

Adam also, there was a palpable violation of the precept, "**Thou shalt not covet.**" She longed for the fruit as something "good for food," pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise." Gen.3:6. Our first parents rebelled against God. They lost their own innocence, and became possessed of a sinful nature, so that all who spring from them are of necessity by nature sinful beings. They brought death upon themselves and upon all their posterity. Surely, in all this, the law of God reveals the greatness of that first transgression. To use the expressive language of Paul, "**The law entered, that the offense might abound.**"

2. The entrance of the law makes the greatness of that first offense to appear also in the fact that it discovers the universal existence of the carnal mind, which is due solely to the fall of Adam. Rom 8.

3. And finally, the entrance of the law reveals the magnitude of Adam's transgression, in that it furnishes a perfect mirror to discover every kind of sin, and shows all to originate in that evil nature which Adam, by his offense, bequeathed upon his whole posterity.

Such was the work of the law. It revealed man's lost condition. It showed the greatness of Adam's offense, and the exceeding sinfulness of sin as everywhere existing among men. But as Paul lays such great stress on what one man, viz., the first Adam, did in introducing sin and death into the world, so does he also lay equal stress upon what one other man, viz., Adam the second, has done to bring righteousness and life to the wretched sons of men. Observe what he says of this other Adam:

**Rom.5:15: "The gift by grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many."**

**Verse 17: "They which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness, shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ."**

**Verse 18: "By the righteousness of one [Christ] the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life."**

**Verse 19: "By the obedience of one [Christ] shall be made righteous."**

Such is the wonderful series of antitheses between Adam and Christ, presented in Rom.5. The first Adam, by his transgression, brought sin and death upon all his race. The second Adam, by his obedience and his death, brings righteousness and life to all who obey him. Heb.5:9.

It is certain that the sin of Adam was in reality the valuation of the moral law; and that the death of Christ is for the purpose of making such sin-offering as that law can accept. If the law of God entered in awful majesty to show the greatness of that one offense which brought death and all our woes into the world, then it is undeniable that in reality that law has been the rule of right from the beginning; and that sin is the same thing in all ages of the world. The law could not show the true character of Adam's transgression if its principles were not obligatory in the days of Adam. The entrance of the law was to show the extent of the transgression of mankind. Adam's sin was the trunk of the grand tree of iniquity, and the sins of his posterity the branches of that tree. The entrance of the law showed the awful wickedness of man, and revealed, in the clearest light, the purity of God's character. It also revealed the immensity of the task undertaken by the Son of God, the second Adam, to save men from their sins, and yet to preserve untarnished the justice and the veracity of God as revealed in his law. And this he wrought in such a manner that though the law caused sin to abound by revealing it in all its length and breadth, the grace of God did much more abound in the great sacrificial offering of the Son of God in tasting death for every man. The law of God caused the death of the first Adam because he became its transgressor; it caused the death of the second Adam because he took upon himself the sin of the world. Beyond all dispute, the law of God extends from Adam the first to Adam the second.

The law under which Adam was placed, and which was transgressed by him, has never been repealed, and, further than this, has not expired by limitation. No one, perhaps, will attempt to show where it has been repealed; but probably most persons suppose that it ran out by limitation in the days of Adam's and that we have nothing to do with it; yet we

have the most palpable proof that that law still exists. Adam's transgression of that law caused the forfeiture of his life and that of his posterity. And, in consequence, the sentence of the law has been inexorably carried out upon every generation of mankind, and is now being executed every day throughout the wide world.

That this is true reasoning, and that this law under which the lives of men have been forfeited, is what Paul calls the law of God, shall now be proved from his own words:

**1Cor.15:56: "The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law."**

Death is here personified, as if it were a living monster engaged in the destruction of our race. The sting with which it inflicts the deadly blow, is sin. The strength of sin to destroy is derived from the law of God. In other words, death is inflicted upon men because their lives have been by sin forfeited to the law of God. The existence of death proves the prior existence of sin. The existence of sin proves that the law of God did previously exist. And finally, the entrance of death in consequence of the sin of Adam, shows that the law of God existed from the beginning; and that it is by its just sentence that death has thus far cut down all our race.

### SUMMARY

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# THE SIXTH COMMANDMENT

**"Thou shalt not kill."**

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

"WHENCE COME WARS?"

Let us take another development of the violation of this commandment. The Scripture asks: **"From whence come wars and fightings among you?"** and the answer is returned: **"Even of your lusts that war in your members."** Then the Word continues, **"Ye lust, and have not; ye kill, and desire to have, and cannot obtain; ye fight and war, yet ye have not."** 4:1, 2. Nothing is more common than war and the war spirit. War is not generally looked upon with abhorrence, even by most professed Christians, but in many cases as a thing to be gloried in. In every war, from every paper and from almost every pulpit the word that is foremost whenever there is any provocation on the part of any other nation, is war. If war is not advocated or longed for, its possibility is at least considered, and yet the people who thus talk and think would be shocked at the imputation that they are breaking the sixth commandment. But of what does war consist?—Of fighting and killing; and killing is forbidden by the sixth commandment. There certainly can be no war with nobody killed, and no intent to kill. **"Love is the fulfilling of the law,"** and **"love worketh no ill to his neighbour."** The Saviour says, **"Love your enemies,"** and love cannot possibly be consistent with killing them.

War comes from the lusts that war in the members of men. A war in which thousands are killed comes from precisely the same source as the

murder of a single individual, and is simply the one case multiplied. One man is envious of another's good fortune, is jealous because the other has attained distinction that he has not, he desires some property that one has; he is angry with him because of disrespectful or contemptuous language, and so he kills him. Even so it is with nations: they go to war because one has used undiplomatic language, and will not withdraw it. One is getting the advantage of another in the matter of commerce; one is acquiring territory which the other wants or claims as its own by right. So they go to war, thousands are killed, and the world and the church unite to praise the glorious deeds that have been done. Meanwhile, the man who killed a single person, has been hanged. All the time the commandment says, **"Thou shalt not kill;"** and no amount of casuistry or reasoning can reconcile war with this commandment since it is wrong to kill a single man, manifestly it cannot be right to kill a thousand.

#### WHAT SELF-DEFENCE INVOLVES

"But" some will say, "we are never the aggressors; we do not fight except in self-defense, to maintain our rights, and we do not believe in fighting under any other conditions." It seems to be almost universally accepted that people must defend themselves and their rights, although we have the assurance that **"the Lord will maintain the cause of the afflicted, and the right of the poor"** (Psalm 190:12), and He says, **"Vengeance is mine, I will repay."** So whoever thinks that he must defend himself, or avenge his own wrongs, takes upon himself work that belongs to God alone, and shows that he thinks that he is better able to manage his own case than the Lord is.

Let us see what is written in the law: Jesus said, **"Ye have heard that it hath been said, an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth; but I say unto you that ye resist not evil; but whosoever shall smite thee on the right cheek, turn to him the other also."** Matt. v. 38, 39. Whoever looks up this quotation will find that it is not addressed to individuals,



but was a rule for the direction of the judges in the cases that came before them. The whole law of which it was a part was given to the Israelites only because of their unbelief, and because they rejected God from being their sole King and Judge. In this, as in many other things, we must believe that **"from the beginning it was not so,"** and Christ's work is always to bring men back to the beginning, to Himself. The words of Christ, **"I say unto you that ye resist not evil,"** taken in this connection, show that His followers are not to have recourse even to the course of law. This is especially what Christ has reference to, as the next verse shows: **"If any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy cloak let him have thy cloak also."** How much less, then, should one take the initiative, and sue another at the law. And since even "legal" measures in self-defense are forbidden by the Gospel, which is the revelation of the commandment, how plain it is that one has no right to take things into his own hands, to do anything in self-defense.

It is very common to hear this teaching called impractical, but the burden of defending the Lord is not laid upon us. He knew what He was saying and He meant what He said, and His own life furnished the example of His teachings. When an armed band came out to take Him by violence, and Peter zealously undertook to defend Him, and He rebuked him, saying, **"They that take the sword shall perish with the sword."** If there was ever a case of rights invaded, a case of self-defense against injustice, oppression, and violence could be justifiable, that was the one. But He demonstrated His own teachings, leaving us an example. When He was reviled, He reviled not again, when He suffered, He threatened not, but committed His case to Him who judges righteously.

Some one is sure to be ready with the question, "What would you do in case a robber should assault you, demanding your money or your Life"? We need never borrow trouble from the future, or speculate how the precepts of Christ can be obeyed, under various conditions. If we believe, grace will be given for the time of need. In the supposed case, it seems

quite evident that the course of wisdom would be to give up the money and save the life. But suppose one resists in such a case, let us make a comparison between him and the robber. If one objects to parting with his money, the robber may kill him and take it. In that case the robber would be rightly called a murderer. It is a sordid murder; he has taken his victim's life for a paltry sum of money. But suppose the robber does not succeed in the object; suppose his intended victim is a quicker or stronger man of the two, and kills him instead; is he not also a murderer?-he has killed a man merely for a sum of money. The robber would kill him to get it, he kills the robber to save it. In either case it would be a life taken for money. Who can say that one is less guilty than the other? Self-defense does not seem so attractive when put in this form, does it?

But the objector may say that it is not for money that the man kills the robber, but to save his own life. Very well, let it be so. Then the man takes upon himself the responsibility of deciding who ought to die and who ought to live. He acts on the assumption that his own life is worth more than the robber's, and takes the case into his own hands, acting both as judge and executioner. This is something for us to think about. The commandment does not say, Thou shalt not kill except in self-defense, or under provocation; Thou shalt not kill anyone except a thief, or a very bad man, or one who you think is not as fit to live as you are. There is no exception: **"Thou shalt not kill."**

The whole question of self-defense, or of standing for one's rights, is settled by the statement that **"Love seeketh not her own."** The defending of one's rights shows the absence of love; where love is not, there is hatred, and hatred is murder, so we cannot avoid the conclusion that self-defense is murder. The commandment, **"Thou shalt not kill,"** forbids violence of any form or degree. No matter how many objections may arise, the fact is that the commandment is easy to keep when the love of God is in the heart, for **"this is the love of God that we keep His**

**commandments, and His commandments are not grievous.**" It is difficult and impossible to keep the law, only when the law of God is not given a place in the heart. There is no depth of cruelty of which human nature is not capable when it is not influenced by the law of God; and there is no measure of righteousness that is not possible where that love is given full sway.

#### A DEADLY WEAPON

There are various kinds of weapons with which murder is committed. One may use a knife, or poison, and among poisons there are some that are worse than others. The tongue is declared to be **"an unruly evil, full of deadly poison."** Of natural, unregenerate man it is said, "the poison of asps is under their lips." Who shall say that it is less sinful to poison a man with the tongue than to poison him with arsenic? The Lord says: **"Thou shalt not go up and down as a tale-bearer among thy people, neither shalt thou stand against the blood of thy brother."** A man's whole life may be poisoned by a few and ill-advised words. It is not merely the one talked about who is injured, but the one to whom the evil tale is repeated may be destroyed eternally, through its influence. And the evil is not lessened, but it is even aggravated, by the fact that the evil thing that is reported is true. We need, then, most earnestly to pray: **"Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth; keep the door of my lips."**

#### THE COMMANDMENT POSITIVE

The law says further, **"Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thine heart; thou shalt in anywise rebuke thy neighbour, and not suffer sin upon him." Lev. 19:17.** Hatred is murder; the absence of love is hatred; and we here see that whoever knowingly allows his neighbor to remain in sin without seeking to save him does not love him. It is counted as hatred, and he is therefore his murderer. **"Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down His life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren." 1 John:16.** "The brethren" here referred to are

not merely those in immediate fellowship with one, but all mankind; for Christ, who gave His life to save the world, said: **"I will declare My name unto My brethren,"** meaning those who were hateful, and hating God and one another. And He came as the living embodiment of the law, and His mission was to save life. In this we see that the law is not negative, but positive; it does not require merely that we should refrain from taking life; and demands that we should do everything possible to save life. **"No murderer hath eternal life abiding in him."** This teaches that it is only by the recognition of eternal life, that we keep from the violation of the commandment. That life abiding in us makes us know the sacredness of life, so that when we see our brother going in the way that leads to death, we are constrained to give ourselves to save him.

#### THE SACREDNESS OF LIFE

The sacredness of the commandment is seen when we realise that life is the gift of God,-not the gift of something apart from Him, but the gift of Himself. Life is as sacred as God, because He is our life. Therefore he who would destroy life would if it were possible destroy God. This is but another statement of the Scripture truth that **"He that committeth a sin is of the devil,"** who "was a murderer from the beginning." He set himself in opposition to God, and although he did not, since he could not, slay the Lord, he was nevertheless a murderer from the beginning, for he had murder in his heart; and the fact was demonstrated when he instigated the princes of this world to kill the Prince of life.

Life is not ours to give or take. The command, **"Thou shalt not kill,"** is absolute, and we may not take our own life any more than our neighbour's life. The reason why, is that it is a sacred trust from God. When one kills another, he deprived him of life for a season. He may shorten his life by years, or it may be that he deprives his victim of but a few moments of life. But even though the one killed had but five minutes more to live, the act is just as much murder as though he had five years.

This truth applies to one's dealing with himself, as well as with another. He who by base practices or neglect or abuse of God's gifts shortens his own life, is directly violating the commandment, **"Thou shalt not kill."**

What a sacred responsibility rests upon every one to lay hold on eternal life by faith, by making use of every agency which God has given for the sustenance of life, and by denying every sinful lust that wars against the soul,-the life. To keep one's body and health is as sacred a duty as to preserve the soul from sin. The man who injures the body of another is justly considered a criminal. But his own body is just as sacred as that of other's, and is really no more his own. **"What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost, which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?" "If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy."** Therefore to injure one's own body or willfully to neglect any means which tends to build it up, is to defile the temple of God, and therefore is a sin against God.

#### PARTNERS WITH GOD

We are workers together with God; God takes us into partnership with Himself in His life work. Everybody is a portion of the channel of the river of life; the stream coming from the heart of God flows through every one who does not obstruct it. Christ, who gives the living water, says that the living water shall flow from every one who believes. In giving man the power to perpetuate the race, God makes him a partner with Himself in dispensing life. Whoever abuses this gift, or by any means cuts off possible or prospective life, or by any means renders himself incapable of giving the fullest possible life to his offspring, is directly guilty of violating the commandment, **"Thou shalt not kill."** Life is a wonderfully sacred thing, and it is a fearful sin to trifle with it.

If we saw nothing but this side of the question, we might well exclaim, **"Who then can be saved?"** We have all **"sinned and come short of the glory of God."** But there is hope. **"If thou, Lord, shouldest mark**



## THE SEVENTH COMMANDMENT

**"Thou shalt not commit adultery."**

He was soon interrupted. A group of Pharisees and scribes approached Him, dragging with them a terror-stricken woman, whom with hard, eager voices they accused of having violated the seventh commandment. Pushing her into the presence of Jesus, they said, with a hypocritical display of respect, **"Master, this woman was taken in adultery, in the very act. Now Moses in the law commanded us, that such should be stoned: but what sayest Thou?" John 8:4,5.**

Their pretended reverence veiled a deep-laid plot for His ruin. Should Jesus acquit the woman, He might be charged with despising the law of Moses. Should He declare her worthy of death, He could be accused to the Romans as one who assumed authority belonging only to them.

Jesus looked upon the scene—the trembling victim in her shame, the hard-faced dignitaries, devoid of even human pity. His spirit of stainless purity shrank from the spectacle. Giving no sign that He had heard the question, He stooped and, fixing His eyes upon the ground, began to write in the dust.

Impatient at His delay and apparent indifference the accusers drew nearer, urging the matter upon His attention. But as their eyes, following those of Jesus, fell upon the pavement at His feet, their voices were silenced. There, traced before them, were the guilty secrets of their own lives. Rising, and fixing His eyes upon the plotting elders, Jesus said, **"He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her." Verse 7.** And, stooping down, He continued writing. He had not set aside the Mosaic law nor infringed upon the authority of Rome. The accusers were defeated. Now, their robes of pretended holiness torn from them, they stood, guilty and condemned, in the presence of infinite purity. Trembling lest the hidden iniquity of their lives should be laid open to the multitude, with bowed heads and downcast eyes they stole away, leaving their victim with the pitying Saviour.

Jesus arose and, looking upon the woman, said, **"Where are those thine accusers? hath no man condemned thee? She said, No man, Lord. And Jesus said unto her, Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more." Verses 10,**

**11.**The woman had stood before Jesus, cowering with fear. His words, "**He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone,**" had come to her as a death sentence. She dared not lift her eyes to the Saviour's face, but silently awaited her doom. In astonishment she saw her accusers depart speechless and confounded; then those words of hope fell upon her ear, "**Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more.**" Her heart was melted, and, casting herself at the feet of Jesus, she sobbed out her grateful love and with bitter tears confessed her sins. This was to her the beginning of a new life, a life of purity and peace, devoted to God. In the uplifting of this fallen soul, Jesus performed a greater miracle than in healing the most grievous physical disease; He cured the spiritual malady which is unto death everlasting. This penitent woman became one of His most steadfast followers. With self-sacrificing love and devotion she showed her gratitude for His forgiving mercy. For this erring woman the world had only contempt and scorn, but the Sinless One pitied her weakness and reached to her a helping hand. While the hypocritical Pharisees denounced, Jesus bade her, "**Go, and sin no more.**"

#### THE ORDER OF THE COMMANDMENTS

We come now to the seventh commandment, "**Thou shalt not commit adultery.**" Before entering into a more minute consideration of it, it will be worth while to consider its place among the ten. Did it ever occur to the reader that the order of the commandments is not accidental? It certainly cannot be, and there must surely be a lesson for us in their arrangement. We may not know all that there is in it, but it will certainly repay study.

The first reveals God in His essential attribute as the Saviour; "**I am the Lord thy God which brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage; thou shalt have no other gods before me.**" He is the only God, because He is the only One who can save. "**I, even I, am the Lord; and beside Me there is no Saviour.**" Isa. 43:11.

The second naturally grows out of this, for "**they have no knowledge that eat up the wood of their idols, and pray unto a god that cannot save.**"



Then we have, in the third, the assurance and the power of God's name. We are not to bow down to graven images, which are nothing, but to take His name, and we have the assurance that we shall not take that for nothing, or "*in vain*." It supplies all that He Himself is.

The fourth commandment reveals the name, "for that His name is near, His wondrous works declare." It shows the Lord at work and at rest; and when we see His works understandingly, we learn His ways, and enter into His rest.

From the contemplation of God as Creator, we are next brought to consider Him as Father. He is the Universal Father, and human parenthood is the revelation of God working through the flesh. From the honour due to our parents, we are to learn the reverence due to God, the Supreme Father of all.

As the life transmitted from father to son is God's life, the sixth commandment is designed to guard its sacredness.

Then we come to the seventh commandment, which also emphasizes the sacredness of life in showing that it must be kept pure and unadulterated. God's life is simplicity itself. His is seen in the most common things by which He conveys life to us, as the air and water. The Apostle Paul says: "**I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtlety, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.**" **2 Cor. 11:3.** The sin of Eve was the first case of adultery, and all the specific acts of adultery since that time have been but outgrowths from that. She left the simple for the complex; the straight way of righteousness and life, for the maze of sin and death.

#### THE BEGINNING OF EVIL

It is not necessary for us to dwell upon the grosser forms of the violation of this commandment; they are generally regarded not only as sin, but as crimes, as offenses against respectability. Whether the gross violation of this commandment is worse than the violation of the other

commandments God alone knows; but one thing is sure, and that is that the "commandment is exceeding broad." People generally regard it as prohibiting the culmination of sin, whereas it deals specially with the beginning of it.

Christ's words in the sermon on the mount, show the spirituality of the commandment: **"Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery; but I say unto you, that whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her, hath committed adultery already with her in his heart."** Christ was not adding anything to the commandment which He Himself had given; He was revealing the breadth and depth of it. His language is unqualified and unlimited. The commandment is violated by an impure thought or look, not simply upon a woman who is not one's wife, but upon any women whatsoever. The lustful thought is adultery. From the commandment as magnified by Christ's statement of it, we see that adultery may exist even within the marriage relation, for that relation does not sanctify lustful thought and impure action.

#### THE INSTITUTION OF MARRIAGE

God Himself instituted marriage in the beginning. When God made man, He made him male and female, and gave them dominion, saying, Be fruitful and multiply and subdue and fill the earth. Gen. 1:27, 28. This was even before the Sabbath was given. On the sixth day, God created man, the last of all His works. The animals were all brought before him for him to name, but among them he found no help that was meet (suitable) for him. There was none that could be a companion for him. So God took from his side a rib, which He built into a woman, and brought to him, and, recognising his counterpart, Adam said, **"This is now bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called woman, because she was taken out of man. Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife; and they shall be one flesh."**

It was after the union of the man and the woman had been blessed by God, and the command to be fruitful had been given, that **"God saw everything that He had made, and behold it was very good. And the evening and the morning were the sixth day."** Gen. 1:31. Then came the Sabbath, the seventh day, which God blessed for man's good. These two institutions, marriage and the Sabbath, come from Eden, and belong to Eden. In marriage, even as in the Sabbath, we have that which, rightly understood, brings us closer to God in His working than anything else.

True marriage brings men into close connection with the Lord, making them partners with Him in His work. In it we have the revelation of the mystery of Christ in His union with the church. The Apostle Paul, after quoting the words found in the second chapter of Genesis, **"They shall be one flesh,"** adds, **"This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church."** And he says that husbands should love their wives, as Christ also loved the church, and that the husband should nourish and cherish the wife even as the Lord the church. **"For we are members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones."** Eph. 5: 22, 23. Marriage is designed to teach us of Christ's saving union with us; but the institution has been so perverted, that as a general thing it is not a true revelation of Christ. We must learn first from Christ what marriage ought to be, and then it in turn will reveal to us more of the Lord than we could know without it.

#### THE FORBEARANCE OF LOVE

There is a world of instruction for as in the statement that **"even Christ pleased not Himself."** He loved the church, and gave Himself for it. Yet He does not force Himself upon any; He has an infinite and continuous longing for the response to His love, yet He is patient and forbearing. He stands at the door, and knocks, letting us know that He loves us with an everlasting love, but He will do nothing without our consent. He will not press His attentions upon us. His long-suffering, forbearing love, always pleading, and yet waiting, is the most marvelous in the universe.

Whoever knows the love of Christ for him, will know the tender considerateness that ought to be shown to a wife.

### "ARRANGING A MARRIAGE"

In order to understand the truth about anything, we must go to the beginning of it. When the disciples asked Jesus a question concerning marriage and divorce, referring to certain regulations that had been given by Moses, Jesus said that these were because of the hardness of their hearts, **"but from the beginning it was not so;"** and then He quoted the record in Genesis.

We often read in the papers that "a marriage has been arranged" between certain parties. Now if we would know exactly how a marriage ought to be arranged, we must go to the record of those which God has planned and controlled. When God would provide a companion for Adam, He made a woman, and "brought her unto the man." There was no mistake here; the pair were made for each other, and both recognised the fact, and were satisfied.

Another striking example is found in the case of the marriage of Isaac. He was the child of promise, the heir of the promise made to Abraham, and his life was in harmony with this fact. He was forty years old, yet even at that age he did not choose a wife for himself. Even professed Christians have not been ashamed to indulge in cheap wit at the expense of Isaac, saying they should not like to have their parents choose for them; but it must be remembered that Abraham did not choose a wife for Isaac. God Himself did the choosing.

Read the beautiful story in the twenty-fourth chapter of Genesis. Abraham's tried servant, who had the same faith as his master, was sent in search of the one whom God had chosen for Isaac. When the servant said, **"peradventure the woman will not follow me,"** Abraham replied, **"The Lord before whom I walk will send His angel with thee, and prosper thy way."** And so it was. And after traveling a long distance, the

servant halted at a well, and prayed to the Lord to show him which of the damsels that came to draw water was the one for his master's son. He did not pray aloud, but spoke in his heart, and even before he had finished praying, the sign which he had asked was granted.

The whole matter was arranged by the Lord, and the relatives of Rebecca, as well as Rebecca herself, recognised the fact. They said, "**The thing proceedeth from the Lord; we cannot speak unto thee bad or good. Behold, Rebecca is before thee, take her and go, and let her be the master's son's wife, as the Lord hath spoken.**" And Rebecca, when asked if she would go at once, said, "**I will go.**" Then the return journey was made, and the servant told Isaac all things that he had done, and Isaac brought her into his mother Sarah's tent, and took Rebecca, "and she became his wife, and he loved her.

**"Now we brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise."** Yes; also as Adam was, we are new creatures. Therefore in those two instances we have a picture of true Christian marriage, of such marriage as will be an effective safeguard against the violation of the seventh commandment.

#### WHO SHALL CHOOSE?

But someone will say, "How unsatisfactory, to have no courtship, no love-making, beforehand." Well, satisfaction all one's life after marriage is far better than a little brief satisfaction beforehand. "Courtship" and "love-making" are terms that should not be used among Christians. Love cannot be made, for it is of God, and has existed from eternity. We can only allow Him to shed it abroad in our hearts by His Holy Spirit. Whoever attempts to make love can produce at the best only a counterfeit. And where God is allowed to direct and indicate His choice, there is no necessity for courtship. We hear much about heresy, which means, choosing for one's self. God is the only One who has the wisdom and the right to choose. He who chooses for himself, whether in the

matter of marriage or anything else, is a real heretic. Such a course shows distrust of God; it is in reality a violation of the first commandment.

When the Scriptures say that the woman was created for the man, we are not to understand merely that women in general were created for men, but that as in the case of Adam and Eve, God who knows the end from the beginning, and who writes our members in His book even before they are formed, and who has a definite purpose for each individual that is born, provides for each man a help meet for him, and will as certainly bring the two together if they will have the patience to wait, as He brought Eve to Adam, and Rebecca to Isaac. And if they are both in Him, they will recognise His choice, and find their happiness in it.

SUMMARY

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## THE EIGHT COMMANDMENT

### "Thou shalt not steal."

"The eighth commandment is to barricade the soul, and hedge man in, so that he shall make no injurious encroachment—which his self love and desire for gain would make—on his neighbor's rights. It forbids every species of dishonesty, injustice, or fraud, however prevalent, however palliated by plausible pretenses."

There are very few people who need to be told that it is wrong to break into a shop and rob a cash-box; that burglary, house-breaking, pocket-picking, and so forth, are criminal and sinful acts. These are all recognised as vulgar crimes, and because of this many suppose the commandments that forbid such things are out of date, so far as Christians are concerned, and that Christianity has outgrown them. Many people have said: "What do we need of the commandment, '**Thou shalt not steal**'? Everybody knows that stealing is wrong. Even a savage shows, by his attempt to conceal a theft, that he knows that it is not the right thing." But we must again repeat that the commandment is exceeding broad, surpassing man's highest thought of perfection. While all, with the possible exception of some who from infancy have been trained to theft, know that the grosser acts, of which the civil law takes notice, are sinful, there are very many professed Christians who in their daily business violate the eighth commandment without the slightest compunction.

#### THE PRACTICE OF THE MAJORITY

It is not an uncommon thing for people to charge different prices for the same goods; to expose one class of goods for inspection, and to deliver an inferior quality; to take advantage of a customer's ignorance; or in various other ways to get more than the actual worth of a thing sold. Everything of this kind is just as really stealing as to pick one's pocket of his purse; yet it is continually condoned on the ground that it is "business." The fact that "everybody does it" seems to many business men, even though they be professed Christians, to be sufficient

justification for any act. They seem to have the idea that if the majority of people are united in any practice, the Lord will regard it as right, even though it is wrong in itself.

Indeed, not only with respect to this commandment, but with all the others, the general custom of the people is of paramount weight with very many. Call attention to a wrong practice, and the reply will be, "Everybody does it;" or present some requirement of the Divine law, and they will say, "Nobody does that nowadays," thinking that they have thereby settled the matter. But the Lord says, "**Thou shalt not follow a multitude to do evil.**" (Ex. 23:2); and, "**Though hand join in hand, the wicked shall not be unpunished.**" **Prov. 2:21.** Much of the "business" that is done in this world is the devil's business, and will not stand the test of heaven: "**Whatsoever ye would that man should do to you, do ye even so to them.**"

"BUSINESS METHODS." "MAKING A LIVING"

The false idea that it is the business of every man to "make a living," leads to many thefts, both small and great. Competition is very keen, and there are many engaged in business, who have no conscience of right or wrong, who fear not God, neither regard man, The unscrupulous customs which they have introduced into various lines of business, have led many Christian people little by little to lower their own standard. The desire to compete with their rivals, and to keep business, has blunted their fine perception of right and wrong, until things that would once have shocked them, now seem to be right and necessary.

By the term "business methods," men commonly understand something different from the somewhat old-fashioned principles laid down in the Bible. Business and religion are thought to be two separate things; and inasmuch as men are exhorted to be "**diligent in business,**" men persuade themselves that whatever is "business" is correct. They forget that at the same time that they are "**diligent in business**" they are to be "**fervent in spirit, serving the Lord.**" The sole business of all man is to



serve the Lord. **"Fear God and keep His commandments; for this is the whole duty of man; for God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil."**

God makes it His business to give us a living, and He alone can do it. It is a grave error to suppose that a living can be made out of methods which have death in them. Every sin, every deviation from the law of God, has death in it, and can end only in death. Christ is **"the way, the truth, and the life."** Therefore only the way of truth, Christ's own way, can give life, or in other words, give one "a living."

#### NON-PAYMENT OF DEBTS

If one puts his hand into another's pocket or cashbox and takes money, that is universally recognised as stealing. It must be evident that there is no less sin if one finds money belonging to another, and appropriates it. Likewise if one is entrusted with money to deliver to another, and he fails to do it, but uses it himself, this is also stealing, equally with the other, although it is sometimes designated by a milder term. What is the difference, then, if one has received from another goods or service, for which he owes a certain amount of money, and he fails to pay the debt? No matter now men may regard it, or what the law of the land may say about it, the fact remains that it is a direct violation of the eighth commandment. The Saviour's quotation of this commandment was, "Defraud not,"-deprive no one of that which is his due; so the convenient way some people have of forgetting to pay their debts is a transgression of this commandment. The Bible way is to pay a thing just as soon as it is due.

Some one will say, **"One cannot always have by him the means wherewith to pay a debt."** Very true, and this emphasizes the necessity for the apostolic injunction, **"Owe no man anything."** If people realized that failure to pay a just debt is a violation of God's law, and if they had a proper sense of the sacredness of the law, they would not order things for which they cannot pay. You again might say, **"I go in debt only for**

**the actual necessities of life; if I have no food in the house, and no money, I cannot see my children crying for bread, when the baker will trust me.**" That is exactly the argument that some people use for taking money without leave. In either case it is lack of trust in God. Anyone who, because he is in need, incurs a debt which he has no prospect of paying, cannot condemn the act of stealing under pressure of need.

If people would, in fear of the commandment which says, "**Thou shalt not steal,**" refuse to incur a debt, no matter what the need, they would enjoy some wonderful experiences of what God could do in supplying their need. He knows what His children need, and He says, "**Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you.**" But when men reverse the order, seeking first to provide for themselves, they shut God off from bestowing upon them the riches of the kingdom. It is impossible to lay too much stress on this feature of the violation of the commandment.

If one has money laid aside for some specific purpose, it is very tempting and very easy to use it for something else. Of course this would be all right if it were simply that one were purposing to purchase a certain thing, and should use that money for something else instead; but it is far from being right; when the money thus laid aside is due to another. Thus: When one's rent is due quarterly, the only way that people with small incomes can be prepared to pay it, is by laying aside each week the weekly proportion. Even though the rent technically be not due until the close of the quarter, it is really due each week; and if the money be used for food or clothing, or worse yet, for pleasure, so that the sum is not ready by quarter day, there is a direct transgression of the commandment. One has appropriated that which is not his own. The money laid aside week by week belongs to the landlord, as much as though it were already in his pocket. The fact that we are allowed to keep it in our possession for a time, does not give us any more right to use it

than we would have to use an equal amount that some other tenant had entrusted to us to pay to the landlord on his account.

#### WHAT WE OWE TO THE WORLD

To all of us the Scripture says, "**Ye are not your own.**" The whole law of which the eighth commandment is a part, is summed up in these words: "**Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind, and thy neighbour as thyself.**" Love means service. The fact that we are not our own, but belong to the Lord, who not only has made us, but who has redeemed us, shows that our service belongs to Him. The Apostle Paul recognized this when he said, "**There stood by me this night the angel of God, whose I am, and whom I serve.**" So the law requires that we shall serve the Lord with all our soul and strength and mind.

But we cannot do anything directly for the Lord. He is not in need of food or clothing, and we could not supply Him if He were. But He has shown us how to render service to Him. His life is given to the world; therefore He says that every service rendered to man is done to Him. We are exhorted, "**Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might.**" To perform our daily labor with all the strength of body and mind that we have is, if done in the fear of God, to love and serve the Lord with all our strength. So the Apostle's exhortation is, "**Servants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh, not with eye-service as man-pleasers, but in singleness of heart, fearing God; and whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men; knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance, for ye serve the Lord Christ.**"

Strength is more than money; therefore if one serves with less than his full strength, or is content to do poor work, on any pretext whatever, he is just as surely guilty of fraud as though he kept back money that belonged to another. The commandment, "**Thou shalt not steal,**"

requires us always to give our best strength, and to do our best work. It is a sin and disgrace for a professed Christian to do poor work.

This does not mean that anybody can at once be master of his business, but it does mean that one should always do his best, and always be striving to improve himself, and that he should not assume to be able to do what he is not. If a man be a carpenter, for instance, and someone entrusts work to him expecting him to be a skilled labourer, and he spoils the job, putting his employer to additional expense because of his incapacity, it is fraud.

People often excuse themselves for slack work, on the ground that they are receiving very small pay; but this is no excuse whatever. Our duty is to do with our might, in the best possible way, whatever we have to do, regardless of the wages received. We owe ourselves to God, and through Him to the world. If we hold back any part of ourselves, we are guilty of robbery. The debt has already been incurred, and we are to work in recognition of it. The wages we receive are not to be considered an equivalent for our labour, but as a gift from God.

Labour is life, and money is no equivalent for life. He who works only for what he gets, and who says that he is rendering sufficient service for the small wages he receives, has a very low estimate of the value of his life. If his work is really worth no more than the money he receives, he is robbing God of strength due Him, and so is robbing the world of service that he ought to render; for, contrary to the common idea, "the world owes me a living," we owe to the world the living which God has already given us in advance.

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## THE NINTH COMMANDMENT

**"Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour."**

"The ninth commandment requires of us an inviolable regard for exact truth in every declaration by which the character of our fellow men may be affected. The tongue which is kept so little under the control of the human agent, is to be bridled by strong conscientious principles, by the law of love toward God and man."

### PART ONE

If we were to attempt to enumerate and discuss all the ways in which this commandment may be and is broken, a whole volume of the Present Truth would not be sufficient. But that is not necessary. We do not need to know all the ways of error, in order to keep in the right way. The man who is in search of treasure does not care to know the roads that lead away from it; all that he desires is to know the one road that will bring him to the right place. There are many wrong ways, but only one right way; and if we spend our time exploring all the devious paths of error, we shall never know the way of truth.

Yet in the present condition of things, it is really necessary to call attention sharply to some particular sins, while preventing the

commandment of truth; because many people are so fixed in a wrong course that scarcely anything less than an earthquake will move them. They will listen to the commandment which forbids what they are doing, and will think that it commends their actions. One must put his finger upon the particular act, and say, "That is sin," before they will have any sense of wrong-doing. Thousands of people read the fourth commandment every week, and honestly think that they are obeying it in keeping Sunday; and many people take the name of the Lord in vain in various ways, without any consciousness of so doing.

### "POLITE LYING"

Custom lies at the foundation of a large amount of the violation of the commandments, the ninth no less than the others. What "everybody does" is supposed to be justifiable. The custom of the people is responsible for a great deal of what is known as "polite lying." God forbid that any of us should be any less courteous than we are; we certainly do not need to cultivate rudeness, but there is a false standard of politeness, and it is the one too often followed. The sort of politeness that depends upon falsehood is evidently not true courtesy; for "no lie is of the truth," and truth cannot come from lying. The same Scriptures that command us not to bear false witness, also tell us to **"be pitiful be courteous"** (1 Peter 3:18); therefore we know that the most perfect courtesy is compatible with perfect truthfulness, and cannot exist without it.

Laziness and cowardice are at the bottom of a great deal of this "polite lying." It comes so easy for even Christians themselves to follow the universal custom of saying things to please people, and lightly to make promises that they do not expect ever to perform. The customer wishes the goods delivered immediately, and the professed Christian tradesman will promise to send them, well knowing that he cannot do so for hours; yet he will not think that he has lied. He did not do so deliberately, but it was so easy to please the customer by making the promise, and then trust to some excuse to pacify him if he afterwards complained.

## "THE ACCUSER OF THE BRETHREN"

Satan, who is a liar and the father of it, is also called **"the accuser of the brethren."** Rev. 12:10. He accuses them before God day and night. Now Satan would know better than to try to make the Lord believe that a person has committed a sin of which he is not guilty. He well knows that no act escapes the eye of the Lord, and that it is useless to try to make Him believe that He has overlooked some fault. Therefore it follows that in accusing the brethren before God, Satan confines himself to the things that they have actually done. Where then is the wrong? Just here: **"It is God that justifieth,"** and whoever lays anything to the charge of God's elect brings false witness against God as well as against the brethren. When God has forgiven a man, it is a grievous sin to accuse the man of sin. Whoever brings up that fault and talks about it to the man's detriment, is doing the devil's work. There is no meaner way of serving the devil than to charge against a person the sin that he has confessed. As soon as a person confesses his sin, God calls him righteous; to call him guilty then is to bear false witness against both man and God.

## LOSING CONFIDENCE

How many there are who cruelly suspect a person, and always treat him as untrustworthy, because of some sin or sins in the past. It matters not that he has confessed his fault, he is still held under suspicion. Some will say, "We know that he has fallen once, and he may again." Yes; and so may the critic. Just as though no man in this world is guilty, except the one whose sin has become public property! The fact that a man has fallen into any kind of sin is no evidence whatever in itself that he will do the same thing again. On the contrary if he has voluntarily, under the influence of the Spirit of God, confessed his sin (and no one ever voluntarily confesses a fault unless he is prompted by the Spirit), that is the best possible evidence that he will be on his guard. If a man has lied to me, and of his own free will comes to me and confesses it, I can have more confidence in him than ever before. When a sin has been

confessed, we must beware of bearing false also witness by our condemnation. It is a terrible thing to condemn where God justifies.

This applies when the sinner is ourselves, just as much as when it is somebody else. When we have confessed our sin to the Lord, He has forgiven it, and we have no right to go on condemning ourselves. We are not our own; we belong to the Lord: and, leaving ourselves out of the question, we must not dare think that He has not forgiven, when He says that He has. How many there are who would place the most implicit trust in the word of a neighbour, but who do not regard it as a sin to contradict the Word of God, thus charging Him falsely.

#### TAKING THE RISK OF LYING

If we ever repeat any story about anybody, we are never safe from the possibility of having lied. In the first place, there is always the possibility of being mistaken: our informant may not have known all the facts, and it may be that the person talked about has done nothing amiss. And in the second place, even if he were guilty, he may have confessed it to God, and been forgiven, before the story reached the ears of any other person. We may say that we certainly would not repeat anything against a person, if we knew that that person had repented; but as long as we do not know that he has not we are assuming all the risk of lying, both against God and man, when we take up a reproach against our neighbor.

#### TALE-BEARING

Many people seem to think that any amount of gossip is justified, provided one does not tell willful lies. But the Bible says that the one who shall abide in the holy hill of the Lord is he who **"backbiteth not with his tongue, nor doeth evil to his neighbour, nor taketh up a reproach against his neighbour."** Ps. 15:3. That is as much as to say that he who has taken up a reproach against his neighbor, will not dwell in the tabernacle of God. Aside from any other reason, it is a fact that it is next to impossible, if not quite, to talk about another's doings or sayings, and speak the exact truth. If we go so far as to tell his sentiments, or to judge



his motives, then it is absolutely certain that we shall be guilty of falsehood; for nobody can state another person's belief, or tell what somebody else thinks. We shall at least tell that which we do not certainly know; and whoever does that is to all intents and purposes a liar. If we tell the truth on any such occasion, it is only by accident. The love of making an accusation is so strong that we are often willing to run the risk of telling an untruth, rather than miss the chance of being the first to tell the news.

If we were called upon to testify in court, we should not be allowed to repeat what we had only heard. We must confine ourselves to what has come under our own observation. Even then it is difficult enough to tell the exact truth. Shall we dare be any less particular as God's witnesses than we are required to be as witnesses for the State?

## PART TWO

### SUPERFLUOUS WORDS

There is a thing spoken of in the fifth chapter of Matthew, which is not usually understood as coming under the head of the ninth commandment, but is commonly referred to the third. Jesus says, "**Ye have heard that it hath been said by them of old time, Thou shalt not forswear thyself, but shalt perform unto the Lord thine oaths; but I say unto you, Swear not at all; neither by heaven for it is God's throne; nor by the earth for it is His footstool; neither by Jerusalem; for it is the city of the great King. Neither shalt thou swear by thy head, because thou canst not make one hair white or black. But let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay; for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil.**" Matt. 5:33-37.

This refers to ordinary conversation, and not to the giving of testimony in a court of law. The Saviour Himself gave testimony under oath, before the Jewish Council. The man who always tells the truth, and speaks nothing else can take a judicial oath without any fear. So the injunction,

**"Swear not at all,"** does not refer to this, any more than it refers to the taking of the name of the Lord in vain. The reference is to the strong assertions and pledges with which people are apt to back up their statements, in order to give them weight.

One will say, "If this is not so, you may have my head for a football." Now his head is not his own to give away, and he has no right to pawn his life in support of anything he may say. **"The earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof,"** therefore we have no right to pledge anything in heaven or earth in substantiation of our assertions.

Some people seem unable to make a simple statement of fact, unaccompanied by something to make it emphatic. In this they show a lack of confidence in their own word, and unconsciously proclaim that their unsupported word is not to be believed. Unfortunately that which they rely on to substantiate it adds no force to it whatever. The Bible rule is to tell the simple, unvarnished truth, and let the matter rest there. Thinking people will attach more weight to that than to anything else. They will understand that the person so speaking is accustomed to being believed, and that is the same as saying that he is accustomed to telling the truth. Anything more than the simplest statement of fact is of evil.

#### PRACTICAL JOKING

Who has not heard people seek to justify themselves for some false statement made to some unsuspecting individual, by saying, "Oh, I was only in fun"? They wished to see how credulous the person was, and to make sport of his innocence. Then if any inconvenience or calamity results from taking the joke as a serious matter, the joker coolly throws the blame upon the deceived one, saying, "He ought to have known that I was joking." That is to say, he ought to have known that you were lying; he ought to have been so well informed as to your reputation, that he would not suppose you to be telling the truth, unless he was especially assured of the fact. How lightly the practical joker holds his character and reputation!

Do you wish to know how the Scriptures regard the sort of "fun" that consists in deceiving an unsuspecting person? Read this: **"As a madman who casteth firebrands, arrows, and death, so is the man that deceiveth his neighbour, and saith, Am not I in sport?" Prov. 26:18, 19.**

Would you think it a light matter if a man should throw a lot of live coals into a crowded room? or if he should begin shooting on the street? or if he should scatter poison in the fields, or in the springs of water? Nothing more terrible can be thought of; yet that is just the character of the practical joker. The man who lies in earnest has at least some hoped-for object to gain; but the man who lies in sport proclaims himself a fool. There are no more dangerous pests in the world.

#### THE ROOT OF THE MATTER

But let us now come to the very heart of the subject. If there is truth in the inward parts, there will be no outward manifestation of falsehood. Christ is the Truth; therefore when Christ dwells in the heart by faith, none of the errors to which we have referred will be seen in the life; for He came to bear witness to the truth. John 18:37. He is called **"the faithful and true Witness."** Rev. 3:14. To us is given the high honour of being classed with him; for God says: **"Ye are My witnesses, and My servant whom I have chosen."** Isa. 43:10. Further on we read: **"This people have I formed for Myself; they shall show forth My praise."** Verse 21. God made man, just as He made everything else, to be a revelation of Himself. **"Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should show forth the praises of Him who hath called you out of darkness into His marvellous light."** 1 Peter 2:9.

The inanimate creation is true to its calling, witnessing for God. See Acts 14:17. The everlasting power and Divinity of God have from the creation of the world until now been clearly revealed in the things that He has made. Only man has proved false to his trust, defacing the image of God,

and repressing the truth in unrighteousness. Yet even in fallen humanity God's faithfulness and truth are to be seen; for every sinner is an unconscious witness to the long-suffering of God. The man who blasphemes the name of God, and even denies His existence, is a monument of His tender mercy. It is a fact that **"all men are liars;"** for while they were made in the image of God, to reveal His character, they exhibit the opposite.

Yet **"we can do nothing against the truth but for the truth,"** no matter how much we try to, for God makes even the wrath of man to praise Him, and so the truth of God more abounds through our lie unto His glory. Rom. 3:7. That is to say, God will see to it that His will is one, even in spite of man; and He will make them the agents of it; but they will have none of the benefit of it, because it is done against their will.

#### STRIFE AND FALSEHOOD

The commandments are all linked together; no one can break one of them without violating the whole. We have read that whoever hates his brother is a murderer, and in like manner we find that he is a liar as well. The Apostle James says, **"If ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth."** James 3:14. Christ is the truth, and He is meek and lowly in heart; now it is a fact that He is come in the flesh, so that every man who cherishes or exhibits bitterness or wrath denies the presence of Christ in the flesh. He holds down the truth in unrighteousness.

#### THE ULTIMATE TEST: CONFESSING OR DENYING CHRIST

In 1 John 2:22, we have the whole case summed up in a single question **"Who is a liar, but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ?"** The one who denies that Jesus is the Christ, is a liar, and according to this question, nobody else is a liar. Now we have traced falsehood to its lair, and can identify it in its very beginning. If a man has not denied that Jesus is the Christ, he is not a liar; but if he has denied this truth, he is a

liar though he never speaks. If you wish to stop lying, you must go to the root of the matter. You may tear off a limb here, and pluck out an evil habit there; but until Jesus is fully recognized and acknowledged as the Christ of God, the lying disposition exists.

Peter at one time denied the Lord, but he did nothing more than every man has done. **"Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, is of God; and every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God."** 1 John 4:2, 3. Moreover, **"whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God;" "and whosoever is born of God sinneth not."** 1 John 5:1, 18. By putting these statements together, and thinking carefully over them, we may see that every sin that we commit is a denial that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh,-a denial that He is the Son of God,- and therefore that it marks us as liars.

We are told, **"The Word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart."** Rom. 10:8. Christ is the Word, and it is by His presence that even sinners live. So we read further: **"If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved."**

We can confess only that which already is so; it is a truth, therefore, that Christ is come in the flesh of every man, and that whoever will confess His presence has salvation. But to confess Christ,-to confess that He is come in the flesh,-is to say from the heart what the Apostle Paul wrote in Gal 2:22: **"I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me."**

To confess Jesus, therefore, is to be just as He was-to allow Him to dwell in us, and to speak and work through us. If this be the case, we cannot help telling the truth, since He is the truth; and if this be not the case, our

whole life will be a lie. The man who has not Christ abiding in him cannot help being a liar.

So the only way any man can keep the ninth commandment is to give himself wholly to the Lord, to be used by Him according to His good pleasure. **"It is the Spirit that beareth witness, because the Spirit to truth."** 1 John 5:6. Christ said: **"Ye shall receive power, when the Holy Ghost is come upon you; and ye shall be My witnesses."** Acts 1:8. Only as one has the Spirit of truth, can one be capable of telling the truth.

#### WITNESSES TO THE TRUTH

Jesus said, **"To this end was I born, and for this purpose came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth."** John 18:37. Again, **"As My Father hath sent Me, even so send I you."** A great mistake that many people make is to suppose that they cannot witness for the truth unless they do a great deal of talking. Just as it is possible for a person to act a lie, so may one act the truth. Often our testimony is a great deal stronger if we keep our mouth shut. It is not necessary for us to be always in an attitude of "defence." We are not obliged, as witnesses to the truth, to answer every objection that cavillers bring. The Lord says, **"Who is blind, but my servant? or deaf, as My messenger that I sent? who is blind as He that is perfect, and blind as the Lord's Servant? Seeing many things, but Thou observest not; opening the ears, but He heareth not."** Isa. 42:19, 20. Jesus is the Truth and the Life. His life was sufficient witness to the truth; then when He spoke, His words were faithful testimony, because He spoke just what He was.

#### RECEIVING THE TRUTH

It is a common thing to hear that such an one has received the truth. What is it to accept the truth-It is to accept the Lord Jesus Christ as one's own personal Saviour. No matter how correct anybody's belief is as to form, he has not the truth unless he has Christ within. Unless a man

knows the Lord, he does not even know what the truth is; how then can he tell the truth? To accept the truth, therefore, is no light thing. It is not merely to want to it, but to be transformed by it.

#### BELIEVING FOR ANOTHER-DISBELIEVING GOD

This is an impossibility. We often hear a man say, "I can believe for others, but I cannot believe for myself. I can believe that God forgives and saves my brother, but I cannot believe that He saves me." This is the worst sort of deception. It is real nonsense. One cannot play fast and loose with the truth in that way. Whoever really believes the Lord, believes Him all the time. The Lord does not change, and He does not display partiality. Therefore if He can be believed at all, He must be believed all the time. **"He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself; he that believeth not God hath made Him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of His Son. And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life." 1 John 5:10, 11.** Whoever disbelieves God to the slightest extent, makes Him out to be a liar. But God is not a liar. He **"cannot lie."** Therefore whoever charges God with lying is himself a liar. And whoever does not believe does this; therefore every person who does not believe that God has given eternal life, everlasting salvation, to him personally, is a liar of the worst sort.

Let no one persuade himself that he thinks well of God, unless he believes with absolute certainty that God saves him. Don't talk about believing that He will save somebody else, but not you. If God is true, you can believe Him all the time, when He speaks to you as well as when He speaks to somebody else. What would you think if a man should say to you, "I can believe everything you say, when I hear you talking to somebody else; but as soon as you begin to talk to me I lose all confidence in you, and think that you are lying." Would you think that he had a very high opinion of you? Yet that is the way many people regard

the Lord, and they are not ashamed to talk such feelings out right before His face.

### SAVED FROM LYING

You say, "Well, then, I am lost, for I have lied all my life." No; you are not lost, for Christ has given Himself to you, and since He is the truth He saves you from all untruth. All His commandments are promises; so when He says that we shall not bear false witness against our neighbour, He means that He will see to it that we witness to the truth, if we but receive Him. Christ died for the ungodly, for all the ungodly; therefore the sum of all lying, in fact, the only lie we can really tell, is to neglect this great salvation. It is the same as saying either that Christ has not died, or else that His death is not sufficient ransom. But, on the other hand, as soon as we accept salvation, our whole life of lying ceases. It is not enough to be on our guard against falsehood; we must submit to the truth. We must by yielding bear witness to the fact that God is abundantly able to do all that He has undertaken. His word is true from the beginning, and is settled for ever in heaven; therefore we may depend upon it. It will not fail us. God Himself has such confidence in it that He says to every one who takes Him at His word, **"Thou shalt not bear false witness." "If ye continue in My word, then are ye My disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."**

### SUMMARY

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## THE TENTH COMMANDMENT

**"Thou shalt not covet."**

"The last commandment condemns covetousness. Every selfish desire, every degree of discontent, every act of over-reaching, every selfish gratification works to the strengthening and developing of a character which will destroy the Christlikeness of the human agent, and close the gates of the city of God against him."

### PART ONE

#### NOT IMPUTING THEIR TRESPASSES UNTO THEM

In the tenth commandment, more than in any other, the unity of the entire law is seen. It summarizes all the commandments, even as the first of them does. It takes in the whole duty of man. **"Thou shalt not covet."** This precept underlies and is the heart of every commandment. In Rom. 7: 7 we read: **"I had not known sin but by the law' for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet."**

Someone says, "I thought lust had to do with the seventh commandment." So it has, and with every other one as well. Lust simply means desire; and since in the fall the desire of mankind is only to evil, lust has degenerated into evil desire, it makes no difference for what. A desire for anything that is forbidden is lust, and is contrary to the whole law of God. "When lust hath conceived it bringeth forth sin."

So we see that the tenth commandment strikes at the root of all sin. The Apostle Paul takes it and, makes it the summing up of the whole law. He who keeps the tenth commandment, cannot so much as think of breaking any other; he cannot have the slightest idea to sin.

## SPIRITUALITY OF THE LAW

**"We know that the law is spiritual"** (Rom. 7:14), and this commandment reveals its spirituality more clearly than any other. Men talk about enforcing the law of God,-about incorporating the divine law into human laws. They fancy that because human laws punish the person who kills another, that they are putting the sixth commandment into effect. They imagine that they are safeguarding the seventh commandment, because there are laws against adultery. It is a very common thing for people to think that they can enforce the fourth commandment. But let them try it with the tenth. How will they succeed?

Well, men have actually been so blindly presumptuous as to try to enforce the tenth commandment. There was only one way, and that was by the Inquisition, invented by the Papacy, which exalted itself to God's place, and even above Him. Men were tortured to wring out of them the secrets of their hearts, and punished for even the thought that they confessed to having harboured. But nobody but God can find out the secrets of men's hearts, and He does not have to find them out, because **"all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do."** Heb. 4:13. So no human power or wisdom can ever determine when the tenth commandment has been broken. When the thought of sin, which is forbidden by the tenth commandment, goes so far as to manifest itself, it comes under the head of some one of the other commandments. To take one's neighbour's wife is a violation of the seventh commandment; to seize upon his house or goods, is a violation of the eighth.

So we see that this tenth commandment deals with that which is all within one's own mind, and is simply the drawing out and summing up of the entire ten. It shows the breadth and spirituality of the whole law of God; for as we have previously learned, **"Whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath already committed adultery with her in his heart."** It is not necessary that one shall have carried his wrong desire

into execution, in order to have violated any one of the commandments.  
**"The thought of foolishness is sin." Prov. 24: 9.**

The tenth commandment is no more spiritual than any other; but it makes the spirituality of the law more apparent than the others do, in that the violation of it is wholly within one's heart, out of sight from all human eyes; yet one cannot break any one of the first nine commandments without first breaking the tenth; and as soon as one has broken the tenth, all the rest are broken.

Thus we see the utter futility of all human attempts to execute the law of God, or to punish transgression of it. Such attempts cannot be made except by those who do not have any sort of just comprehension of the law, and the nature of it; and that is why every effort to enforce or execute God's law results in a perversion of it. It is only a perverted view of the law that men have, who think to take it into their own hands, and so what they enforce is not God's law, but something directly opposed to it.

This appears when we consider all so-called "Sabbath laws." They are of course Sunday laws. Men will in the same breath talk about the sacredness of the fourth commandment, and about the necessity of rest for the body one day in seven, and of securing it by legislation in favour of Sunday. But the fourth commandment contains no reference to Sunday, except to tell all men that in it they may labour, and do their own work, and, moreover, the Sabbath of the Lord is not more physical rest, but is spiritual rest,-God's rest-for God is Spirit.

The tenth commandment, therefore, closes up the circle of the law, and unites the two ends, and then surrounds the circle itself, bidding everybody to keep his hands off from it, and leave God to conduct the affairs of every portion of His universal kingdom, even to putting into us the desires that we ought to cherish.

## PART TWO

**"Thou shalt not covet."** Covetousness is idolatry. This is indicated in **1 Tim. 6:7: "Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not high-minded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy."** As you read this, remember the words of Christ: **"Take heed, and beware of covetousness; for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth."** **Luke 12:15.** And then follows the story of the man whose ground brought forth abundantly, and whose barns were overflowing, and who proposed to say to his soul, **"Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry."** That man was trusting in uncertain riches, instead of in the living God, who had given him his abundance. Instead of trusting God, whom he could not see, he made a god of that which he could see, and his hands could handle.

## THE LOVE OF MONEY

**"They that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil [all kinds of evil]; which, while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows."** **1 Tim. 6:9, 10.**

Mind, the text does not say that money is an evil, or the root of evil. It is the love of money that works mischief. There have been very wealthy men, who were also patterns of goodness. Job had the testimony from God Himself that he was a good man, yet he was the wealthiest man in the country. But he did not trust in his riches. He was willing to distribute and the cause which he did not know he searched out; and when his wealth was taken from him in a day he was not in the least upset by it. He still trusted in God who had given it, and who was able to care for him without it.

## HOARDING MEANS POVERTY

**"There is that scattereth, and yet increaseth; and there is that withholdeth more than is meet, but it tendeth to poverty." Prov. 11:24.**

It is a law God's universe that that which is hoarded up withers away, and that which is scattered abroad increases. It is not money, that is the evil, but the love of it which leads one to hoard it up merely to look at, or as a fancied security against future need. Hoarding up wealth not only tends to poverty, but it is a sign of it. The miser has a constant sense of lack. The old epitaph on a miser who had heaped up thousands, ended thus:-

"Yet this poor man, with all his store,  
Died in great want,-the want of more."

The man of small means, who freely divide what he has with others, is the real rich man. His action shows his recognition of the fact that he is in connection with a boundless store of wealth. A small stream of water constantly flowing is far better than thousands of barrels of it stored up in a cistern.

## RICHES NOT ROBBERY

There seems to be in this age a special onslaught against rich men, as though to be rich were synonymous with being a robber. Corrupt practices are not to be defended; but we are not warranted in attributing all evil to men of means. There is just as much covetousness among the poor as among the rich. The man who covets wealth, and succeeds in getting it is certainly no worse than the one who covets it, but falls to grasp it. It is covetousness, not the possession of wealth that is idolatry. It is not how much one has, but how one uses it, that determines his character.

## CONTENT WITH FOOD AND RAIMENT

The word "covetousness" is translated from a number of different words, but as used in our study it means to desire more than one needs. If a

man has no coat, it is not a sin for him to desire it sufficiently to make the effort to get it; that this is compatible with perfect content, for content does not mean lazy indifference.

**"Having food and raiment, let us be therewith content."** The evil arises from this, that people think that they must specify just how much and what kind of food and clothing they shall have. The principal thing for us is contentment; God has charged Himself with the task of seeing that we have food and clothing sufficient for our needs. He made the first clothing that man ever wore (Gen. 3:21) and it filled every requirement; it supplied covering and warmth, God is zealous for the carrying out of His own laws; and since He has ordained that every creature should have a covering suited to its state, we may be sure that He will not neglect the creatures whose need is greatest and most apparent.

Just a word with regard to clothing. Do not forget that its true object is comfort and decency, and not adornment. It should simply be that which is suitable, and then one need have no fear of its being in bad taste. When one is specially noticeable because of what one has on, that is just as bad taste as to be noticeable because of a lack of clothing. One should be noticed, if noticed at all, for what one is, and not for what one has or has not. The clothing, that is no part of the individual, is altogether secondary to the clothing which grows on one as the result of the Spirit within. A knowledge of the relative value of things, and that God Himself, who gives us life, and who thereby shows that it is His business to supply the things necessary for its proper sustenance, and that He alone can do it, will bring constant and perfect content.

#### CONTENTMENT NOT LAZINESS

Someone may say, "That doctrine will tend to laziness; if the stimulus of the necessity to earn one's own living be taken away, -if men get the idea that God will provide everything for them, -they will not labour." Not so; the man who serves the living God can never be lazy. We have learned that man is not to work for money, but because he owes his best service

to the world. The man who knows the Lord, and who understands his relation to Him, will work just as hard and as diligently without any prospect of wages, as he will for a large salary, knowing that it is his business to give his strength to the world, in the service of Christ, and the Lord's business to sustain his life.

#### DISCONTENT OR WORRY IS COVETOUSNESS AND IDOLATRY

Look again at what constitutes covetousness. We have all thought that it consisted in not desiring a rich man's possessions, but we shall see that it comes much closer to us than that. Jesus says: **"If God doth so clothe the grass of the field, which to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven, shall He not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith? Be not therefore anxious, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? For after all these things do the Gentiles [heathen] seek."** Matt. vi. 30-32.

We see from this that anxiety for food and drink and clothing, is the characteristic of the heathen, and is therefore idolatry. So again we are brought face to face with the truth that covetousness is idolatry, **"Ye cannot serve God and Mammon."** We cannot be worrying over what we have not, or over the loss of something that we had, and at the same time be serving God. Everything in this world belongs to somebody; therefore if we covet something that we have not we are coveting what belongs to somebody also wishing to deprive some other person of something in order that we may be pleased. But that is not to love our neighbour as ourself, and so is a violation of the whole law. Or, if it be claimed that there is a great deal that is not in the possession of any body, and which is therefore open to all, we must still admit that it belongs to the Lord, who will put us in the way of getting it, if it be right for us to have it; and if we complain because we have it not, we are manifesting a lack of trust in God's loving care for us.

## ABSOLUTE TRUST IN OUR FATHER

See how this commandment teaches us absolute trust in God, which is the perfection of Christianity. The Lord knows what we have need of before we ask Him, and He has provided it before we become conscious of our need, just because He is our Father. We have much to learn from the relation between parent and child. We are to receive the kingdom of God as little children; and the child is the perfect example of trust and content, yet it is not lazy. The unspoiled child, or the child yet too young to have learned any of that worldly wisdom that consists in worry (dignified by the title of "looking out for the future") expects as a matter of course to have its wants supplied, and it is content with what it receives. It never thinks of food until it is hungry, and then it receives the necessary supply, because the parents have anticipated the little one's needs. Why cannot those parents learn a lesson from themselves? Why should they think that they are better than their Father?

## TRUST, NOT IDLENESS

But the child is not idle; far from it. There is nothing more active than a healthy child. The father does not work so many hours a day, nor apply himself so persistently as his child does. It will work the whole day for nothing. To no purpose, do you say? Oh, no; it is obeying the Scripture injunction, "**Whatever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might.**" Laziness is an acquired habit, the result of wrong training by parents. It is only the man who thinks that the responsibility of the world rests upon him, that works to no purpose; for he goes about his tasks with a drawn, set face, and a look of anxiety, which reflects no credit whatever upon the God whom he may be professing to serve; and remember that the sole business of man on this earth is to glorify God.

## SAYING, "THERE IS NO GOD

People become sad and moody under their self-imposed burdens. That is equivalent to saying that there is no God. The fool says in his heart,



**"There is no God,"** and he acts as though there were none, and that the weight of the world, and the responsibility for conducting its affairs properly, rested on him. Having an abundance of goods in one's possession, and trusting in them, is not a whit worse than worrying over the lack of them. The one who does this, shows that he would do just as the rich fool did, if he were but situated in the same way.

#### THE TRUEST HAPPINESS

The rich man does not have all the pleasures of life. The best things in the world are those that money cannot buy; and the possession of great wealth actually hinders one from enjoying some of the most delicious pleasures. One of these is the pleasure of self-denial, of going without a thing that one might lawfully possess. There is the pleasure of royalty in finding oneself independent of things which most people deem necessary. The real king is not the one who has everything at command, but the one who can command himself to be content with little, and can cheerfully obey.

#### THE SUM OF THE WHOLE MATTER

The sum of the whole matter is to trust God, and be satisfied with the fatness of His house, even though to the man, who blindly burrows in the earth like a mole, it may seem leanness. This absolute trust in the Lord is absolute righteousness, the very opposite of heathenism.

**"Incline thy heart unto My testimonies, and not to covetousness."**

**Ps. 119:36.** Covetousness, therefore, is the desire for anything contrary to the commandments, anything except God's life. That we may desire with our whole soul. The man who can say to the Lord, **"Whom have I in heaven but Thee? and there is none on earth that I desire beside Thee"** is safe from the transgression of the tenth commandment, and so from the commission of any sin.

## SATISFACTION IN SERVICE

The commandments of the Lord are life everlasting, "**and in keeping of them is great reward.**" Not *for* keeping them, mind you, but *in* keeping them. The reward is the pure, perfect, simple life that they bring. Take heed, beware of covetousness even in the service of God. Beware of thinking that you would serve God, keep His Sabbath, for instance, if you were situated financially so that you could. There would be no virtue in your service even if you did keep it under such conditions. What kind of god is it that you propose to serve? Is it one who needs your service? or one whom you need, to serve whom is rich reward? The answer to this marks the difference between heathenism and Christianity.

The satisfaction of serving Christ indeed, of knowing Him, and feeling His life in us, impelling us to action, is so great that with it one cares for nothing else. The deliciousness of perfect trust, of resting in the everlasting arms, and by that very resting partaking of their intense activity, is greater than the possession of all riches. He who has, and appropriates, the fulness of God's life is so far from desiring anything else, that he would spurn the offer of anything that would rob him of any of that which is his by faith. "**He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give up all things?**" and he who has all things, and knows that he has them, is absolutely shut off from the possibility of covetousness.

## SUMMARY

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## PROMISES TO LIVE BY

Ephesian 5:5 For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God.

Rom.5:20 Moreover the law entered, that the offense might abound.

Revelation 14:12 Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus.

1 John 4:8 He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love.

Luke 16:13 No servant can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.

Deuteronomy 4:40 Thou shalt keep therefore his statutes, and his commandments, which I command thee this day, that it may go well with thee, and with thy children after thee, and that thou mayest prolong thy days upon the earth, which the LORD thy God giveth thee, for ever.

Ps. 119:36 Incline thy heart unto my testimonies, and not to covetousness.

Matt. 5:38, 39 Ye have heard that it hath been said, an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth; but I say unto you that ye resist not evil; but whosoever shall smite thee on the right cheek, turn to him the other also.

James 3:14 If ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth.

Philippians 2:4 Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others.

1 Peter 3:8 Finally, *be ye* all of one mind, having compassion one of another, love as brethren, *be* pitiful, *be* courteous:

*Another*

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