

# **THE TEN COMMANDMENTS**

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## **1. FOUNDATIONS FOR FREEDOM**

**The editor of a newspaper was interviewing a man who applied for the job of being a rewrite man. "Are you good at condensing"? the editor asked. "Sure", was the snap reply. "All right then, take this and cut it short", he said , as he handed him a copy of the ten commandments. The applicant was momentarily startled, but then he took his pencil, wrote briefly, and handed it back. The editor looked at it and said, "Your hired!" He had written one word--don't.**

**This story illustrates the popular misconception about the ten commandments. They are seen as negative, and can be**

**summed up in the philosophy that says thou shalt not enjoy life. Whatever you like, don't do it. Now it is true that 8 of the 10 are negative, but as we shall see, this is for a very practical reason. Jesus summed them up, not with a don't, but with a twofold positive do. Do love God with all your heart, and do love your neighbor as yourself. The first four commandments deal with loving God, and the last six deal with loving our neighbor.**

**But if these most famous laws in the world can be stated positively, why were they given in a negative form originally? Those who do not care to look for an answer just dismiss them as being irrelevant for a positive thinking world. They claim the negative nature of them leads to excessive negativism. This is illustrated by the mother who said "Go see what Johnny is doing and tell him to stop." One little boy under this kind of atmosphere thought his name was Johnny don't. There have been many Christians who have measured their piety by the number of things they don't do. The Pharisees were experts at this sort of thing also, and they were able to compile a list of several thousand things they did not do. It was a negative religion.**

**Too many negatives lead to a life of emptiness. The absence of evil is a good thing, but when good is also absent, one is not living a life pleasing to God. Jesus told of the man who had all of the demons that possessed him driven out, and all was swept clean. All the evil was gone, but no positive good filled the vacuum, and the result was the evil returned in greater power than it had before. Those who try to live on**

**negatives often take great falls into sin, for negatives are just not a good foundation. The negative is only of value when it is a means to a positive end.**

**A missionary in Africa was trying to explain the Ten Commandments to an old native chief. "You tell me I'm not to take my neighbors wife?" "That's right" said the missionary. "Or his ivory or his oxen?" "Quite right!" "And I must not ambush him on the trail and kill him?" "Absolutely right" said the missionary. "But I cannot do any of these things," said the savage, "I am too old. To be old and to be Christian are the same thing." This illustrates how weak a mere negative religion and morality would be. Righteousness would be equivalent to inability. If negative become ends in themselves, then one becomes more and more Christian the less he is able to live, and death would bring perfection. This is, of course, nonsense. Negatives cannot be ends in themselves, but must be means to a positive goal.**

**We fail when we lose the positive, for it is the positive that gives authority to the negative commands. People demand to see the positive value in having their freedom limited by prohibitions. If you say don't, they want to know why, and the why had better be positive if you expect people to respect the authority of the negative. Robert Kahn, a Jewish Rabbi, points out that the Declaration of Independence has this great positive statement-"All men are created equal and are endowed by their Creator with rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness." Then, in order to preserve these**

**positive values, a Bill of Rights was appended to the Constitution. When you read them you notice they are of a negative character. The gist of each is-**

**Congress shall make no law**

**The right of the people to bear arms shall not be infringed**

**No soldier shall be quartered**

**the right--to be secure shall not be violated**

**No person shall be held to answer.**

**No fact tried by a jury shall be otherwise re-examined**

**Excessive bail shall not be required**

**The enumeration of certain rights shall not be Construed**

**These are the eight negatives of the ten amendments called the Bill of Rights. They are negative commandments for the preservation of positive rights. We see from this, that when negatives are the means to positive ends, they do not destroy our freedom, but become foundations for freedom. Without these negatives to protect us we would be far less free as Americans.**

**Now if we go back to the Ten Commandments, we see the same principle involved. It is almost as if the Constitution and Bill of Rights were patterned after the 20th chapter of Exodus. In Exodus 20:2, we see the positive statement of God, which gives authority to His Commandments, and which is the basis for their existence. "I am the Lord your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage." God did not impose this list of laws upon a people to suppress them and their liberty. They were**

**the gift of a wise God to a people He had set free, and who He wanted to remain free.**

**John Locke said of the law, "The end of the law is not to abolish or restrain, but to preserve and enlarge freedom." This was certainly God's intention in giving the Ten Commandments. If oppression and suppression was His motive, He could have done no better than to have left them in their bondage in Egypt. The whole atmosphere surrounding the Ten Commandments is one of positive liberty. Liberty so new and fresh and complete that it could only lead to chaos and disaster without the limitations of law. All of the negatives are like the Bill of Rights negatives. They are to preserve the great liberty which God had given them.**

**By forbidding murder, for example, all are free to live. By forbidding stealing all are free to possess property without fear. Each negative is for the protection of a positive value. Freedom is dependant upon the limiting and the guiding of man by law. Total freedom is a paradox, for it leads to total bondage. Total freedom is when every man does what is right in his own eyes, and has no responsibility for the rights of others. It is absolute individualism, which is anarchy.**

**During the French Revolution they took the not out of the Ten Commandments, and they put it into the creed. They had, thou shalt kill, steal, commit adultery, lie; and I do not believe in God the Father Almighty. The results of this**

**misplaced not was one of the worst periods of history. The anarchy and blood bath, that came because of the absence of this not, was a classic example of the positive value of negative limitations. Remove the negative and you destroy the power of the positive. This is true in many realms of life. If you take the negative cable off your battery the positive cable will not start your car. The two must work together to achieve a positive goal. That is why negative laws are also needed to achieve positive goals in human society.**

**When the Ten Commandments are seen in the proper perspective they become foundations for freedom, and not hindrances to freedom. They hinder and restrain only that perverted freedom which leads to bondage. If there is a world where all goes well without respect for life, property, and purity, it has not yet been discovered, and until some space traveler charts it on the map of the universe, the Ten Commandments will be relevant and essential to the good life and best society.**

**Cecil B. DeMille, in preparing the script for his well known production of the Ten Commandments, caught something of the meaning of God's eternal Word when he said, "Our modern world defines God as a "religious complex" and laughed at the Ten Commandments as old fashioned. Then, though the laughter, came the shattering thunder of great world wars, each more terrible than the last and a blood-drenched world, no longer laughing, cries for a way out. There is only one way out. It existed before it was Engraved upon the tables of stone. It will exist when**

**stone has crumbled. The Ten Commandments are not rules to obey as a personal favor to God. They are the fundamental principles without which mankind cannot live together. Armies are mighty, atom bombs are mighty. Ideologies born of blind pride and passion are mighty. But the truth of God is mightier than all, and it shall prevail."**

**Remove the laws that limit the earth to its orbit around the sun, and you gain a liberty which would hurl it into extinction. We are only free to live and breathe as we do, because of the limitations of law. So it is with the Ten Commandments. The New Testament does not repeal them, but rather, lifts them to an even higher level by summing them all up in love. Paul in Gal. 5:13-15, gives us a perfect example of the necessity of the law being fulfilled in love. "You, my brothers, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature; rather, serve one another in love. The entire law is summed up in a single command: "Love your neighbor as yourself." If you keep on biting and devouring each other, watch out or you will be destroyed by each other." This shows us that the Ten Commandments are as essential for the survival of the Christian Church as they were for the survival of Israel. The only difference is, the New Israel stresses the positive aspect of love in the fulfilling of them.**

**When they were given to Israel, they were given to a very immature and undisciplined people. They had been slaves for hundreds of years, and were not an advanced and highly civilized people. Negatives are necessary on this level of**

development. We see this in raising children. When they are young and immature, and do not understand ideals and positive values, you are limited to saying "no, no" to guide them. The positive replaces the negative only as they become mature. This is the pattern we see in God's dealing with men. The Old Testament has a focus on the "no, no", but the New Testament focus is on the "yes, yes." The more mature people become in their relationship to God the more valuable and precious the commandments become. An unknown poet put it-

"The truth that yesterday was mine is larger truth today;  
It's face has aspects more divine, it's kinship fuller sway  
For truth must grow as ages roll, and God looms large upon  
the soul."

When we see the Ten Commandments from the true Biblical perspective, we see them as gifts of grace. They came from God who first delivered Israel, and then gave the law to preserve that liberty He gave them. The origin of the law is God's love. The goal of it is that we might love Him who first loved us, and our neighbor whom He also loved. As given to Israel, however, they were exclusive and not universal, for God had delivered and redeemed only Israel. The Ten Commandments as given in Exodus were only for Israel, but since the coming of Christ they are universal, and all men are obligated by them, especially those who believe. Jesus died for the sins of all men. He became the universal Savior, and now all men can be led out of bondage to sin and Satan by faith in Him. This becomes the New Testament



**basis for obedience to the Ten Commandments. All who have been delivered are obligated to express their gratitude by obeying the laws of their Deliverer.**

**Laws become the foundation for freedom. Obedience to God's laws is our expression of love to Him who first loved us and set us free. Love and law are partners in the Christian life, and they work together for the good of man. As we study the Ten Commandments, we must be aware that we not just studying what was relevant to ancient Israel, but what is relevant to our daily life. What is old is not obsolete just by being old. The laws of nature are very old, but I never heard of a movement to stop keeping them. I never heard any parents say, "my folks always told me not to touch a hot stove, but that is old fashioned. I let my kids touch the hot stove, and don't push any of that old stuff on them." The reason some things are old is because they are essential for all generations. The law of gravity is as old as time, but just as fresh and new and vital to life as it was on the first day of time. The Ten Commandments are old, but they will never be outdated. Break them today, and it is just as foolish as trying to break the law of gravity today. D. L. Moody said, "The commandments of God given to Moses in the mount at Horeb are as binding today as ever they have been since the time when they were proclaimed in the hearing of the people."**

**We are saved by faith alone in Jesus Christ, but saved people must still obey the laws of nature and the laws of God. Law does not save, but there is no way to live a life**

**pleasing to God, and one that leads to happiness, apart from obedience to law. The very angels of God, who never sinned, live in obedience to God's law. In Psalm 103:20 we read, "Bless the Lord ye His angels that excel in strength, that do His commandments, harkening unto the voice of His Word."**

**The Christian sees the Old Testament law as a means of fulfilling the New Testament law of Christ, which is the law of love. It is not a way of being saved, but a way by which we express our love to God for being saved by grace. Our freedom in Christ, limited by our obedience to the Ten Commandments, will lead us to live a life worthy of our Lord. The greatest freedom in life is the freedom to please God. Thus, in studying the Ten Commandments, we are studying the Foundations For Freedom.**

## **2. THE LAW AND THE CHRISTIAN**

**An angry group of citizens shouted at their small town mayor-"Every city car that passes through here breaks the law by breaking the speed limit. You've got to do something about it, and do it fast." "Don't you worry," said the mayor with confidence. "I'll raise the speed limit to 150. Let's see them beat that!"**

**This mayor had an easy solution, which would effectively**

**element lawlessness. All you have to do is change the law, or redefine lawlessness. You can just change the definition of lawlessness and get rid of it. This is a process that goes on all the time in our culture. What was once a bad thing is no longer a bad thing because it has been defined as no longer bad, but acceptable. Relativity is real, but when it enters into the realm of morality it becomes very dangerous. Men use it to change what is evil in God's eyes into what is acceptable to men. Or, on the other hand, they change what was once a virtue into a vice. For example, the young girl who brought her Bible to school was sent home, as if it were a crime.**

**It is no wonder that there is confusion about the law, for it is no longer stable as it once was. It is full of loopholes, so that not all are treated equal, and it can be changed any day, so that what was wrong yesterday can be right tomorrow. The average American is skeptical about the law, for he knows it is often just an arbitrary will of the majority imposed on the minority. Much of the lawlessness of our day is due to the laws protection of injustice. The law can protect and defend evil as well as good. It can be an instrument of oppression and slavery, as well as a force for freedom. Every dictator and tyrant controls his people through law. Abuse of the law is as common as its legitimate use.**

**Even in the church the law of God was abused. The Puritans in Salem, for example, were determined to legislate the Kingdom of God into reality, and they were going to make the New Jerusalem on earth. These were some of the Sabbath laws they made-**

**No one shall run on the Sabbath or walk in his garden.  
No one shall make beds, cut hair, or shave.  
No woman shall kiss her child on the Sabbath.  
No food or lodging shall be given to any Quaker or other  
heretic.**

**And they were not just kidding either. Disobedience was not  
tolerated, but met with heavy penalties.**

**Roger Williams, one of the heroes of freedom, was a  
minister in Salem. He objected to the use of law in regulating  
matters of conscience. He said this is contrary to the doctrine  
of Jesus Christ. This was an attack on their system of law,  
and they pronounced the sentence of banishment on him, for  
the audacity to question their law. He was able to escape and  
by the help of friendly Indians get to what became known as  
Rhode Island. It was there that Roger Williams established  
the first place on earth with total religious liberty. He also  
established the first Baptist church in America there.**

**He became a hero of freedom, and he is studied in all the  
secular history books. Yet, he became this hero by being  
lawless. He rebelled against the laws he felt were unjust both  
in the church and the state. He started the long hard battle  
to get the laws of the state and the church to leave men free  
in the realm of their religious beliefs. You cannot make  
believers by means of the law. This is a personal act of choice  
and faith, and not a matter you can legislate. Many  
Christians through the centuries have ended up in prison,  
just like Peter in the New Testament, because they refused to**

**obey laws that interfered with their obedience to God. They were seen as lawless, but in reality they were being loyal to the highest law, the law of God.**

**Christians have recognized what observant men of all ages have noticed, and that is, that law that is a respecter of persons is an instrument of evil, whereas, law that treats all men equally is an instrument for justice. Benjamin Franklin said, "Laws like to cobwebs, catch small flies, Great ones break them before your eyes." An 18th century saying of similar thought goes like this-**

**"The law doth punish man or woman  
That steals the goose from off the common,  
But let's the greater felon loose  
That steals the common from the goose."**

**In other words, there is a dual standard in which the weak and poor must suffer the full penalty of the law, but the rich and powerful can escape it and even become heroes in doing so. Pope said, "All look up with reverential awe, At crimes that 'scape, or triumph o'er the law."**

**The Christian must respond when asked about his view of the law, that it is a realm where every situation must be evaluated by itself. If the law is just and consistent with the absolute law of God's revelation, the Christian is bound to defend it. If the law is unjust and is itself a violation of the law of God, the Christian is equally bound to be lawless, and defy that law for the sake of freedom and loyalty to God.**

**The heroes of freedom in church and state have been those who defied unjust laws.**

**All of this means that there is nothing more relevant to our day than a depth knowledge of God's law. It becomes the absolute guide and standard by which the Christian must decide where to stand to be a true defender of freedom. We dare not decide on the basis of the world's standard, for it is completely relative to the values of the world. The Christian is not lawful or lawless by his relationship to any of man's standards, but by his relationship to God's standards, which are summarized in the Ten Commandments. You might be thought of as a perfectly law abiding American citizen, and yet be a lawless rebel in relationship to the law of God. You may never murder or steal, but be filled with hate and covetousness, which the law of God forbids. On the other hand, you may end up in prison because you do not obey the law of the land that demands prejudice and hate.**

**Lawful and lawless are terms that must be seen in relationship to the revealed Word of God to have any significance for the Christian. The Church has always recognized this and that is why Orthodoxy has never even suggested that the New Testament has eliminated the Ten Commandments. They are still vital guides for the Christian life.**

**Luther said, "He who destroys the doctrine of the law destroys at the same time political and social order...."**

**Calvin wrote, "We must not imagine that the coming of Christ has freed us from the authority of the law; for it is the eternal rule of a devout and holy life, and must, therefore, be as unchangeable as the justice of God." John Wesley wrote, " The moral law, contained in the Ten Commandments and enforced by the Prophets, he (Christ) did not take away. It was not the design of his coming to revoke any part of this...The moral law stands on an entirely different foundation from the ceremonial and ritual law... Every part of this law must remain in force upon all mankind, and in all ages."**

**These convictions have been stated by the great Christian leaders of this century as well. Spurgeon said, "First, the law of God must be perpetual. There is no abrogation of it, nor amendment of it. It is not to be toned down or adjusted to our fallen condition; but every one of the Lord's righteous judgements abideth forever." And D. L. Moody said, "Jesus never condemned the law and the prophets, but He did condemn those who did not obey them. Because He gave new commandments it does not follow that He abolished the old. Christ's explanation of them made them all the more searching."**

**These quotes from outstanding representatives of the Christian Church make it clear that Orthodoxy has always considered the Ten Commandments to be an absolute revelation perpetually binding as long as earth shall last. Those who criticize them as being old and obsolete for our day fail to see their depth and perpetual relevance to all**

**ages. They say the old morality is stagnant like a puddle that has set until it stinks. In Christian Reflections, C. S. Lewis refutes this fallacy in a way worthy of being quoted, even though it is a lengthy paragraph.**

**"Space does not stink because it has preserved its three dimensions from the beginning. The square on the hypotenuse has not gone moldy by continuing to equal the sum of the squares on the other two sides. Love is not dishonored by constancy, and when we wash our hands we are seeking stagnation and putting the clock back, artificially restoring our hands to the status quo in which they began the day and resisting the natural trend of events which would increase their dirtiness steadily from our birth to our death. For the emotive term 'stagnant' let us substitute the descriptive term 'permanent.' Does a permanent moral standard preclude progress? On the contrary, except on the supposition of a change-less standard, progress is impossible. If good is a fixed point, it is at least possible that we should get nearer and nearer to it; but if the terminus is as mobile as the train, how can the train progress toward it? Our ideas of the good may change, but they cannot change either for the better or the worst if there is no absolute and immutable good to which they can approximate or from which they can recede. We can go on getting a sum more and more nearly right only if the one perfectly right answer is 'stagnant'"**

**This is the Christian attitude toward the law of God. It is permanent, absolute, and it is the standard by which we test**



**the validity of all other laws. If they are unjust and are a hindrance to man's legitimate freedom the Christian is to oppose them as Jesus did the laws of the Pharisees. Law is good and vital to man's happiness and welfare, but law is only absolute when it is God's law. The Ten Commandments are God's law for all men in all ages.**

**If an atheist says the Sea of Galilee is North of the Dead Sea, it is just as true as if a Christian says it. If a thing is true it makes no difference who says it. If an evil man says two plus two equals four, it is not less true because he is evil. A godly man cannot make it more true, for it is an objective truth evident to all.**

**The Ten Commandments in some form are seen all over the world in every culture. You can find laws from ancient Egypt to modern India, which are just different versions of the Ten Commandments. They are the universal top ten, for they deal with issues that are relevant to all men. Civilized men the world over, though fallen and lovers of sin, know that there are some things that need to be forbidden to make life tolerable.**

**The Mohammedans consider them just as sacred as do the Jews and Christians. There is nothing on which so many of the people of the world agree. They are no less true and valuable when quoted by a pagan. They cannot save man, but the fact is they help control man and his evil nature. It is obedience to these top ten that keeps the world going. Every culture that rises above the barbaric does so because**

**people are regulated by these laws. Millions of pagans have a life with some degree of meaning and peace because they live in the midst of neighbors who do not kill, steal, or violate their mates.**

**The problem is, it is only the second half of the ten that man obeys. The first half deals with God and loyalty to Him. Here man is weak and this leads to humanism. Humanism is faith in man without faith in God. It is the result of a split in the Ten Commandments. Man has developed a split-level world where he has cut himself off from the top of the top ten. Until he gets the two halves of these ten united he will be divided in his inner being and be a civil war. Humanism fails, not because it is not full of what is true, but because it deals with only half of reality and leaves the greatest half out of the picture, which is God.**

### **3. THE FIRST COMMANDMENT**

**EXODUS 20:1-3 And God spoke all these words: I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. You shall have no other gods before me.**

**In the book, The Doctor Of Crows Nest, and old doctor Ferguson fell in love with the hands of young Barney Boyle. "You must be a surgeon, Barney," he said. "You've got the**

**fingers and the nerves!" Barney was hesitant, but the doctor pointed out all the advantages and the help he could be to others. He concluded, "Ah, boy, God knows I'd give my life to be a great surgeon. But He didn't give me the fingers. I haven't the touch. But you have! You have the nerve and the fingers and the mechanical ingenuity; you can be a great surgeon. You shall have all my time and all my books and all my money; I'll put you through! You must think, dream, sleep, eat, drink bones and muscles and sinews and nerves! Push everything else aside! He cried waving his great hands excitedly. And remember!.... here his voice took a solemn tone...let nothing share your heart with your knife."**

**Here is an earthly example of the motivation behind the first commandment. God had great ambitions for Israel. He wanted a people who would be an instrument of His grace and love to all the world. Though them He would bring into the world the Great Physician, who alone would succeed as an effective surgeon against sin. God had great plans, just as the doctor did for young Barney, but both God and doctor Ferguson had the same obstacle to overcome, and that was the free will of man that can choose, not only less than the best, but even the worst. Barney could choose to be a bum and waste his gifts, and Israel could choose to go a whoring after other gods and bring disgrace upon the name of Jehovah. As a matter of fact, that is exactly what happened, and it proves the point that free will is the basic problem in the God-man relationship. Until the will is submissive there is no way that man can be successful in**

**fulfilling the plan of God.**

**God must win our obedience to the first commandment or the rest of them become meaningless. If we are not absolutely loyal to Him and Him alone, we will not be concerned about being loyal to His standard of morality. Dr. Ferguson said "if you want to be a successful surgeon you must let nothing share your heart with your knife." God is saying in this first commandment, "if you want to be successful in living a life pleasing to me, let nothing share your heart with you love for me." In other words, make me your first priority in all of life. All other loves, such as family, friends, and neighbors must be subordinate to your love for me. Love for God must be first and foremost, always.**

**Thoreau said, "Simplicity, simplicity, simplicity! I say, let your affairs be as two or three, and not a hundred or a thousand-simplify, simplify." God will not settle even for two or three, however, but demands we simplify down to one ultimate loyalty. This is what the first commandment is all about. Let's look at the implication of this first commandment.**

**The first implication of this commandment is that God has made man free to defy His sovereignty. God does not impose the benefits of His acts of grace upon man without their consent. By sheer power God brought Israel out of Egypt, but He did not by sheer power compel them to acknowledge Him as their God. For their good He commands that they do so, but the very existence of the**

**command implies that they have the freedom to do otherwise. They demonstrated their freedom time and time again by defying this first commandment. The whole history of the sufferings of Israel is the history of their disobedience to the first commandment. Yet, God did not by sheer force ever compel them to obey it as he compelled the water of the Red Sea to separate. Taking Israel out of Egypt was simple compared to the task of taking Egypt out of Israel. The first was a matter of power, but the second called for the cooperation of man's will.**

**God's sovereignty does not play the same role in the moral and spiritual realm as it does in the physical. He does not force men into submission. The poet wrote-**

**And He that looketh wide and high,  
Nor pauses in His plan,  
Will take the sun out of the sky,  
Ere freedom out of man.**

**In the very giving of the law God respects man's freedom, but He gives them the law as another act of sovereign grace, knowing that if they use their freedom to choose His will they will find what is best in life for themselves. Israel will become degraded, like all the surrounding nations, if she does not freely choose to obey the law of God. When the Jews chose not to follow the law they entered into the bondage of fear and foolish superstition. They became idolatrous and immoral, and only after the wrath of God sent them into captivity did they finally learn how to use**

**their freedom to choose loyalty to God.**

**Freedom, which is man's greatest asset, is also his greatest problem, until he learns to yield it up to God. Obedience to the first commandment is not forced on us, but for those who are looking for a shortcut to God's best this is the commandment to obey. We are free to be fools, but God gave us the history of His people's response to this commandment to help us avoid the folly of trying to find happiness apart from obedience to it.**

**God honored man as the only creature on earth that has the ability to choose to obey or defy His commandments. God in His sovereignty has determined that He will not force you to do His will, but He will require you to pay the price of choosing wrong. The chemist can do as he pleases with his chemicals, but if he does not respect the laws of chemistry he may suddenly find himself leaving his lab by the way of the roof. We are equally free to defy the moral laws of God, but we are not free to escape the judgement that will result from our bad choice. All of life revolves around the choices that we make. We are not responsible for the outcome, but we are responsible for the choices we make. Bonaro Overstreet's oft-quoted words speak to this issue.**

**You say the little efforts that I make  
Will do no good: They never will prevail  
To tip the hovering scale  
Where justice hangs in the balance.  
I I don't think**

**I ever thought they would.  
But I am prejudiced beyond debate  
In favor of my right to choose which side  
Shall feel the stubborn ounces of my weight.**

**The first commandment is God's calling to man to choose Him and His will as the first priority in their lives. This choice is the key to their own happiness.**

**The second implication we want to consider is that this first commandment implies that there are other gods. That sounds shocking when you hear it for the first time, but it becomes a commonplace piece of information as you read the commentaries. This first commandment clearly forbids other gods being worshipped, but it does not state that there are no other gods to be worshipped. It only states that for Israel there is to be only one God. He was the only God, but the existence of other gods is not denied. If there were no other gods, what would be the point of forbidding anyone to worship them?**

**When we consider the polytheism all around Israel, we know the many gods who were worshipped were not objectively real, but they were very definitely subjectively real. They captured the loyalties of men, and did so with Israel as well. In other words, non-existent gods are still very real and God has to compete with them for man's loyalty. If the false gods of the pagans were not a real threat to Israel's right relationship to God, He never would have bothered to make their exclusion a part of the first commandment.**

**God is actually the author of a gods are dead movement. He seeks to get them excluded from the consciousness of His people so that they die from neglect. God is all for any movement that kills off and eliminates some of the millions of false gods men have created. It sounds strange, but as monotheists, who believe in only one God, we must constantly be on guard against all kinds of real non-existent gods. What is all amounts to is that there is only one capital God, but a multitude of small gods which run all the way from figments of the imagination to objectively existent fallen creatures such as Satan, the god of this world.**

**The problem of non-existent gods hit the early church and though Paul knew they did not exist, he also recognized that some Christians believed in them because of their former lives of idolatry. For the sake of these Christians the stronger Christians were not to eat meat offered to a non-existent god, because the god was real to the weaker Christian. In other words, it is possible for a Christian to believe in the actual reality of other gods. Paul says in I Cor. 8:4-7, "So then, about eating food sacrificed to idols: We know that an idol is nothing at all in the world and that there is no God but one. For even if there are so-called gods, whether in heaven or on earth (as indeed there are many "gods" and many "lords"), yet for us there is but one God, the Father, from whom all things came and for whom we live; and there is but one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom all things came and through whom we live. But not everyone knows this. Some people are still so accustomed to idols that when they eat such food they think of it as having**



**been sacrificed to an idol, and since their conscience is weak, it is defiled."**

**We see then, that both in the Old Testament and the New Testament there is a process of education necessary to bring men to the point of recognizing one, and only one, God. God did not start by saying there are no other gods, but rather, do not put other gods before me. If you are talking with someone and they inquire about Allah and the gods of other people, do not waste your time trying to disprove the existence of these gods. Even as non-existent gods they have great influence. Your primary task is to point them to the God of revelation and urge them to put their trust in Him. The issue is not whether there are other gods or not, but whether or not they have surrendered to the God who has provided their Savior in Jesus Christ.**

**The Bible does not try to prove God's existence, but urges men to put their faith in Him and obey His revealed will. Clovis Chappel says you could be out on the desert dying of thirst and find evidence that water is somewhere nearby, but the evidence will not save you without a drink of the actual water. No one can live on proof of the existence of water. They need to experience the life giving qualities of actual water. So it is with God. Proofs of His existence are no more satisfying than proofs of the existence of water. Men must respond to God's revelation in faith to experience the reality of God. Thomas Hardy sat in a church service and felt so lonely because he had not responded in faith to the God of the worshippers. He wrote-**

**Heart of mine knows not that ease  
Which they know, since it be  
That he who breathes "all's well" to these  
Breathes no "all's well" to me.**

**God breathes His all's well only to those, who out of a multitude of gods, and possible ultimate values, will choose to put Him first. Even though He is the only objectively eternal God, yet men must choose Him above all the influential non-existent gods to gain His salvation.**

**In Japan, those who respond to the gospel are often so grateful for the knowledge of one God after having eight hundred thousand to choose from. It gives unity to life, and with one God to concentrate upon they can get to know Him. This is one of God's major purposes in this first commandment. God wants to be known, and the best way for man to get to know Him is by concentration on Him alone as ones ultimate relationship. We will focus on this in the next chapter.**

#### **4. CONCENTRATION COMMANDED**

**A salesman who was growing more and more nervous about his travel by air went one day to see a statistician. "Can you tell me what the odds would be against my boarding an aircraft on which somebody had hidden a**

**bomb?" he asked. He replied, "I can't tell you until I've analyzed the available data. Come back again in a week." The next week the worried salesman returned and asked if the answer was ready. "Yes," said the statistician, "the odds are one million to one against you getting on an aircraft with one bomb on it." "Those are good odds," said the salesman, "but I'm not sure they are good enough for me. I travel a good deal." "Well then, if you really want to be safe," The statistician counseled, "carry a bomb with you. My calculations indicate the odds are one billion to one against your boarding an aircraft with two bombs on it."**

**This is obviously crazy advice, but the statistics are correct and they reveal how you can prove anything with statistics. The jump of the odds from one million to one billion also points out what a radical difference there can be between one and two. Upon close examination we find the most radical transition anywhere is the jump from one to two.**

**Elton Trueblood, the outstanding Quaker theologian, points out some things of interest here. He says that the step from two to three is relatively slight, but the step from one to two is enormous. Why? Because when you go from two to three you are going from one degree of plurality to another, but when you go from one to two you leapt out of one category into another totally different, not only in degree but in kind, for you leap from singularity into to plurality. For example, if a man has two or three wives or any number beyond this he remains in the same class-he is a polygamist.**

**But if he has one wife he is a monogamist. To go from one to two is a change in class, but to go from two to any other number is only a change of degree within the same class. To go from two to any other number is just a change in quantity, but to go from one to two is a change in quality.**

**One is the most unique of all numbers, not only because it is the beginning of numbers, but because it represents a class all it's own. Singularity refers to one, and one only, but plurality refers to all the rest from two to infinity. Trueblood says, "There is more essential difference between one and two than there is between two and a million." This is more than an interesting fact of mathematics, it is an important theological truth. One is the great theological number, for ultimates are characterized by singularity, and they call for undivided concentrated commitment. Paul in Eph. 4 says, "There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of us all..."**

**Christianity is characterized by oneness, and we find this is also central in the Old Testament. The most basic text of Judaism is Deut. 6:4, "Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord." One God is the foundational doctrine of the Bible, and that is why commandment number one deals with the fundamental issue of oneness. God prohibits a plurality of gods and demands singular and concentrated devotion to Himself. No other category but oneness is acceptable. He will tolerate nothing but that unique class of number one.**

**The Old Testament emphasis is on the prohibition of polytheism. The New Testament emphasis is on the positive concentrated devotion to the one God. Both have the same goal, but before one can concentrate he has to get rid of his divisive loyalties. Let's look first at the Old Testament emphasis which-**

**I. PROHIBITS COMPOUND DEVOTION: It might be hard for us to conceive in this day of growing atheism and anti-religious attitudes, but one of man's basic problems has always been that he is too religious. Man's tendency has always been to believe too much rather than too little. The result is, his religion distorts all of reality and becomes a vice rather than a virtue. Doctor John Baillie says, "A pagan is not a man who does not believe in and worship deity, but a man who believes in and worships too many deities." The pagan is too religious. He has no unity of life, but is a shambles of disunity, tossed about by fears and uncertainty. He is at the mercy of gods everywhere, and never knows for sure how to placate them or gain their favor.**

**Paul in Rom. 1 says that one of the worst curses that ever befell man was when God gave them up to worship their manifold gods. As too many cooks spoil the soup, so too many gods spoil life. When you have gods galore and even more, your devotions are divided. There is no basis for unity in the individual or society. Chaos reigns within and without. Every man creates his God in his own image. Too much religion can be more of an enemy to man's unity than no religion.**

**The Jews came out of Egypt where there were many gods, and they were headed for Canaan where there were many gods. The only hope for Israel to become a unified nation was to prohibit them from giving devotion to the plurality of gods they would encounter. Even two gods is one too many, for it divides man, and man cannot be divided in his ultimate loyalties and be happy. Jesus said that we cannot serve God and mammon. You will love the one and hate the other he said. A compound ultimate devotion is a psychological impossibility.**

**This is a universe and not a multiverse. The planets revolve around a single Sun, and so it must be with man. He cannot have a dual or plural center and be happy. He must have a single center, a single devotion, a single God. Oneness is the only category into which ultimate value will fit. Science confirms monotheism by revealing the unity of all creation. There is only one Creator of this unity, for all is regulated by one system of law.**

**Now you might think that this commandment is not relevant for our day. The choice now is not between one God and many, but between one God and none. Atheism and not polytheism is the great competitor for mans loyalty today. Gods Word prohibits the jump from one to two, and God demands that His people reduce their devotion to one God, but the atheist wants to reduce even further and have no God at all. Even one is one too many for them. But atheism is really only a subtle move to get back to**

**polytheism. Even the atheist and unbeliever has values which become the object of his highest devotion. For some it is the state, or money, or pleasure, or power, or fame, but every man has his gods, and if he does not have one, and one only, he will have several. Oneness alone is ultimate, and if man goes either way, ahead to two or more, or back to none, he opens himself up to an infinite number of gods. No God and many gods leave a man in the same boat. Atheism and polytheism both leave men empty, for neither provides for an ultimate loyalty. Man only rejects the one true God because of his foolish desire for a plurality of gods, and this is as true today as it was in the ancient world, and it leads to the same problem of lack of unity.**

**Civilized men in America are polytheist and their broadminded message is, "All gods are the true god, and everyone is a prophet." Everyone makes his own god in his own image. The effect of this plurality of gods demanding devotion is the same as it has always been. There is a breakdown in unity, a loss of standards of morality, and it is every man for himself. There is no longer a single voice to follow, but a host of voices calling men to go different directions. Man's nature cannot stand this disunity, however, and so there is a desperate effort to find a cause that will satisfy the craving for oneness. Man needs oneness even if he rejects the oneness of God. He searches for a single ultimate loyalty to which he can give undivided devotion. Conrad Aikin in *Time In The Rock*, expressed the mind of those caught in the whirlpool of plurality, but recognizing the need for a single cause to give life unity and**

**meaning-**

**We need a theme! Than let that be our theme:  
That we, poor grovellers between faith and doubt,  
The sun and north star lost, and compass out,  
The heart's engine all but stopped, the time  
Timeless in this chaos of our wills-  
That we must ask a theme, something to think,  
Something to say, between dawn and dark,  
Something to hold to, something to love.**

**Man's very nature cries out for a single ultimate  
loyalty--something to hold too, something to love.**

**The First Commandment is God's merciful attempt to  
help man avoid the painful search for a way out of the  
darkness and despair of a plurality of devotions, to the light  
and love of a single devotion. Even with this prohibition,  
however, Israel failed time and time again before she learned  
the truth stated by H. G. Wells, "Until a man has found God  
he begins at no beginning, and works to no end." After  
much suffering for disobedience, Israel finally did forsake all  
other gods, and escaped the disunity of compound devotion.  
So when we come to the New Testament we see Jesus  
emphasizing the positive aspect of the First Commandment  
which-**

**II. PROMOTES CONCENTRATED DEVOTION:  
Jesus said the First Commandment is that we are to love  
God with all our hearts, minds, and soul. The negative**



**aspect of the command is its exclusiveness. It excludes all other gods and demands that they be eliminated. Positively, it is an inclusive commandment, for it calls not for just one aspect of our devotion, but for all aspects of it. It demands that the plurality of our nature be united in an undivided concentrated devotion. Our whole nature is to be united around the oneness of God.**

**One God, one law, one element,  
And one far-off divine event  
To which the whole creation moves.**

**Concentrated devotion is the fundamental principle necessary for all success. That is why it is the First Commandment. If we do not start here we will get nowhere. God knows that concentration is essential and that none will be able to keep His law and be pleasing to Him if they do not acquire the singleness of devotion required by this First Commandment.**

**If a man cannot have a concentrated devotion to one God, how can it be expected that he will be able to be committed to lesser loyalties? A man who fails to obey the First Commandment is likely to break all the rest, for they are a unity and all depend on the first. Jesus taught that if we love God with all of our nature the rest of the commandments will fall into place and be fulfilled in love. A small boy reading a well-known hymn read it wrong, but the wrong reading was still a basic truth. He read, "take my life and let it be concentrated Lord on thee." Emerson said,**

**"The one prudence in life is concentration, the one evil is dissipation."**

**Vance Havner, like many others, is convinced that the weakness of Christians today is the result of their dissipated devotion. He writes, "there are not a few saints today who spread themselves out too thinly. They are taken up with so many good concerns that too many irons are in the fire. They attack along a front so long that they never advance anywhere. They would do more if they did less." Aaron Crane, an efficiency expert wrote, "the mind cannot successfully attend to two things at once, for a part of the mind can never accomplish as much as the whole, and divided attention always causes inefficiency in some direction." That is why Paul said, "this one thing I do," and not these twenty things I dabble at.**

**God is the greatest efficiency expert and that is why He demands concentrated devotion. He knows that a divided devotion creates an unstable life. A young man was proposing to his girlfriend and he said, "I am not wealthy like Jerome, and I don't have a yacht and convertible like Jerome, but my darling I love you." The girl responded, "I love you too, but tell me more about this Jerome." She had a divided devotion, and when you offer a divided devotion you offer a mutilated devotion, and we do not want that kind of devotion even on the human level. How much less does God want it? His nature demands the whole of our devotion and so does our happiness.**

**During the Civil War the Southern States kept making offers to Lincoln. They offered to give up more and more territory if the rest would be allowed to remain independent. Lincoln, however, met each new offer with refusal, and at a Conference he placed his hand on a map so as to cover all the Southern States, and gave this ultimatum, "Gentlemen, this government must have the whole." Lincoln demanded total unity with no exception. "A nation divided against itself cannot stand," he said, and God says the same of the soul. A soul divided in its loyalties cannot stand, and that is why He demands that our devotion be concentrated on one God--Himself.**

**Arthur Sweltz in New Directions From The Ten Commandments, tells about the movie, Save The Tiger. Jack Lemmon plays the role of a man who lived during World War II. He accepted good and bad in life as his parents had and their parents before them. Now he feels lost, however, for the routine of life had been shattered. He says, "There are not rules anymore, just referees." Everything is relative, but relative to what? He had lost his foundation and life becomes very insecure without a foundation. That is why God gave man this First Commandment. He begins his letter to His people--exclusively yours. He does this, not only because He is the only God, but also because the gods those men invent rob them of the freedom they were meant to enjoy. In a maze there are many ways to go, but only one leads to freedom. God in this First Commandment is putting up a sign, which says, in the maze of life this is the way to go. He**

**does not do it to make life limited, but just the opposite, to prevent men from dead ends, and lead them to freedom. Man has only two choices--he can follow the God who made him, or follow the gods he makes. The one leads to life and freedom, and the other to bondage and death.**

**This First Commandment is a law of love, for God knows we cannot be happy in split-level living with dual or multiple gods demanding our devotion. The law is God's preventative love, whereas the cross is God's redeeming love. If I say to my son, "thou shalt not go near the river," that is a law of love given to prevent him from danger and death. But if he defies this law of love and goes and falls in anyway and I leap in and save him, that is redeeming love. In the law God warns, but in the cross God rescues and redeems. Love is the motive behind both.**

**The law could not redeem man anymore than my prohibition could pull my son out of the river. God had to give His Son to redeem us and save us from the consequences of sin, but after being delivered, the law still stands as a law of love to prevent further folly and falls. After I rescue my son from the river, he still needs to heed the command to stay away from it. The law is even more meaningful now, for he knows the dangerous consequences of disobedience.**

**So it is with the First Commandment of God. The Christian can appreciate and experience its great value more than ever. He can avoid the dangers and unhappiness that**

**comes from lack of concentrated devotion to one ultimate and absolute God. Let us, therefore, concentrate our devotion, and make the choice that G.A. Studdert-Kennedy made in his poem-**

**All war must end in Peace. These clouds are lies.  
They cannot last. The blue sky is the Truth.  
For God is love. Such is my Faith, and such  
My reasons for it, and I find it strong  
Enough. And you? You want to argue? Well,  
I can't. It is a choice. I choose the Christ.**

**None of us can do everything in life, but all of us can do the most important thing in life--we can make this choice, and by such concentrated devotion obey the First Commandment.**

## **5. RELAXATION COMMANDED**

**A young boy was visiting his uncle on a Sunday when a new neighbor knocked at the door. When he answered it, and learned that he wanted to borrow the lawn mower, he conveyed the message to his uncle. The uncle said, "If he mows his lawn on the Sabbath he'll be breaking the Ten Commandments. So go and tell him that we have no lawn mower."**

**When a man will lie and break the Ten Commandments in order to keep someone else from breaking them, one suspects the compelling motivation is not a humanitarian heart, but a selfish one. Besides breaking the law of God himself, the uncle did not prevent his neighbor from doing so, for one does not keep the Sabbath by the mere negative fact of lacking a lawn mower. Obedience to the fourth commandment is a matter of one's attitude and relationship to God. No amount of legislation and coercion can give to men the essence of the value of the fourth commandment. Law and force can retrain a man from doing many things, but it cannot compel him to keep the Sabbath holy as a day of rest and worship.**

**One of the perpetual problems of our nation is the problem of the church and state in relation to the law. This was no problem in Israel, for the church and state were one. A crime against God, which we would call a sin, was a crime against the state. It was an act of treason against the ruler of the land, and, therefore, punishable as a crime.**

**In America a sin is not necessarily a crime. Over half of the Ten Commandments can be broken, and it is of no concern to the state as far as the law goes. We feel it is not within the jurisdiction of the state to legislate on matters of religion. The New Testament makes it clear the Pharisees legislated the blessings of the Sabbath right out of existence, and made it a burden. Jesus refused to be bound by man made laws for this day. He said the Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath. It was a gift of God for**

**man's benefit, and so He threw overboard the legalistic legislation, and used the Sabbath for teaching, healing, and doing good. They, of course, hated and despised Him for His lawlessness. They sought to kill Him as a Sabbath breaker, but Jesus refused to be bound by legalism.**

**The Puritans were also infected with this germ of legalism, and in some ways, in spite of their greatness, and powerful influence for good in our nation, were just like the Pharisees in their strictness for details. Richard Brathwaite wrote,**

**To Brandbury came I, O profane one!  
Where I saw a Puritane one  
Hanging of his cat on Monday,  
For killing of a mouse on Sunday.**

**Whether this is fact or fiction, we have many actual laws on record that show they meant business when it came to keeping the Sabbath. One of the Pilgrim fathers drew up a code of laws for the state of Massachusetts, and this was one of them. "Whosoever shall profane the Lord's Day by doing any unnecessary work, by unnecessary traveling or by sports and recreation, he or they who so transgress shall forfeit forty shillings, or be publicly whipped; but if it shall appear to have been done presumptuously, such person or persons shall be put to death, or otherwise severely punished at the discretion of the court."**

**If such laws were in force today, America would be a**

**different nation, especially on Sunday. But Christians would be the first to protest such legislation, and they should be, for this is not the purpose of government to legislate religious conviction. The state has no right to impose the conviction of any group on the rest of the citizens. We would not want the Seventh Day Adventist conviction imposed on us, forcing us to worship on Saturday. Nor do they want ours imposed on them. It is true that forcing people to take a day off for rest and worship would be good for them, but so would it be good if they got to bed early, drank a lot of juice, and ate lettuce, but who would want these to be matters of legislation? To get the full value of what God intended by this fourth commandment one must chose to obey it with a free and committed will.**

**This is one of the two commandments that is stated positively, but it also has a negative aspect which we want to look at briefly before looking at the positive. The negative aspect-**

## **I. PROHIBITS PERPETUAL LABOR.**

**It is important that we see the limitation of what is prohibited. Pleasure, laughter, and recreation are not prohibited. It is the labor of life that is to halt on this day. It is to be a day off for everyone, even the slaves, so that it is a day of rest and happiness for all. By prohibiting work one day in seven God made all men in the community equal in their dignity before Him. All had the equal right to rest and worship. All had the right to have time to develop their**



**souls, and maintain the health of their body. This commandment was God's greatest gift to man in the Old Testament, for it alone gave every man equal freedom to be what God wanted them to be.**

**The Sabbath is God's testimony to, and preservation of, the dignity of man. H. Cohen, a Jewish author, writes, "The Sabbath became the most effective patron-saint of the Jewish people. The ghetto Jew discarded all the toil and trouble of his daily life when the Sabbath lamp was lit. All insult and outrage was shaken off. The love of God, which returned to him the Sabbath each seventh day, restored to him also his honor and human dignity even in his lowly hut." Another Jewish author said, "There is no Judaism without the Sabbath." The Sabbath played a major role in the preservation of Israel in her exile.**

**This gift of one day in seven free from labor was not just for the good of the Jews, but for the good of all men. Jesus said it was made for man, and just for Israel. The Jews recognized this also, and Cohen writes again, "Had Judaism brought into the world only the Sabbath, it would thereby have proved itself to be a producer of joy and a promoter of peace for mankind. The Sabbath was the first step on the road which led to the abrogation of slavery." By prohibiting perpetual labor God guaranteed that every person would be free from the tyranny of materialism, and free to give a portion of his life to develop his eternal soul, and the higher faculties of manhood.**

**Life has changed a great deal from Biblical days, and we do not put in the hours of toil to earn a living as men use to, but the fact remains, we can still be so busy, even if we only work five days a week, that we are slaves to the flesh, and servants of the tyrant of materialism. We are not to worry about the letter of the law, for life is too different for that to have meaning today, but the spirit of the prohibition of perpetual labor is still relevant and essential for the Christian life. It is wrong to be so busy that our physical health and spiritual life is neglected. God demands that we take time off from the business of making a living in order to live. An old Negro spiritual captures the idea.**

**Slow me down, Lawd, I'se agoin too fast,  
I can't see my brother when he's walkin past,  
I miss a lot of good things day by day,  
I don't know a blessing when it comes my way.**

**We must slow down and obey this negative aspect of the commandment which prohibits perpetual labor if we ever hope to gain the benefits of the positive aspect which we want to consider next, and which,**

## **II. PROMOTES PROFITABLE LEISURE.**

**You will notice that nothing is said about worship. That comes in as a logical consequence, but the essence of the command is for relaxation. To keep it holy does not mean to worship. It means to keep it separate and distinct, and different. It means to keep it a day dedicated to God. This**

**includes worship, but all the emphasis is on rest. You might think that all this fuss about relaxation is majoring on a minor. Why should one of the Ten Commandments, and the longest one at that, be a command to relax?**

**God made us, and He happens to know what is essential to the well being of our body, mind, and spirit. Many tests have been taken that prove relaxation must balance out exertion if one is going to have a healthy life. Man's whole system rebels against continuous monotony and endless repetition-what we call being in a rut. God built the need for diversity and variety into our very being. Then He gave the gift of the Sabbath that we might satisfy that need. Neglect of this leads to the inability to relax, and the result is we become irritable and depressed. A problem that could be handled with ease ordinarily becomes a major calamity when we are exhausted. We become sarcastic and pessimistic about life. Women easily cry, and men easily lose their temper, and if you could add up all the sorrow that comes to life due to lack of relaxation, you would realize the importance of this fourth commandment to all of society.**

**Man needs a day of rest from toil and release from tension. He needs a day on which he can renounce the temporal and be receptive to the eternal. An English doctor, George Newman said, "Most people stand in greater need of rest than of movement. There is an excess of noise, clatter and meaningless activities." Thousands of quotes from authorities in many fields demonstrate, beyond a shadow of a doubt, that one day of rest in seven is a must for those who**

**are interested in good health. God is concerned about our bodies. Jesus spent a good many of His Sabbaths healing the bodies of people. We should be concerned also, and practice God's prescription for good health.**

**A day of rest is not only essential for the body but for the mind as well. Doctor Crichton Browne said, "We doctors are now constantly compelled in the treatment of nervous diseases to prescribe periods of absolute rest and complete seclusion. Some periods are, I think, only Sundays in arrears." If we do not take periodic rest, or if we do not grant God one day in seven on the installment plan, we may have to pay it all in one lump sum by enforced rest through illness. For example, the people of Israel spent four hundred and ninety years in the promise land and neglected to obey God's law of letting the land rest one in seven years. They let seventy Sabbath years pass by unheeded, but they only hurt themselves, and gained God's judgment, for they were carried away into captivity for seventy years, and the land got its seventy Sabbath years of rest. II Chron. 36:20-21 says, "He took into exile in Babylon those who had escaped the sword.....To fulfill the Word of Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah, until the land had enjoyed it's Sabbaths. All the days that it lay desolate it kept Sabbath, to fulfill seventy years.**

**God takes the need for relaxation very seriously. Everything needs rest, even land and animals. It is just a basic principle of life, and not to obey God's command to relax is to try and defy the laws that govern both physical**

**and spiritual reality. The only alternative to obedience is to suffer the consequences. A Jewish author said, "This is the meaning of the Jewish Sabbath, to give to man peaceful hours, hours completely diverted from every day life, seclusion from the world in the midst of the world."**

**This is essential for us as Christians. We can never be in the world but not of the world if we never find seclusion from the world. Vance Havner wrote, "It is high time we learn that in this nerve-wrecking maddening modern rush, we have let the spirit of the times rob us utterly of meditation, devotion, and rest. There is no depth to us. A lot of our Christian life and work is frothy, superficial, and thin. We are growing mushrooms, not oaks. We spread ourselves too thinly, striking everywhere and hitting hard nowhere. We Christians often lead dissipated lives, squandering our energies in a multitude of good things but becoming so exhausted that none of it counts for much."**

**The Jews used one day in seven to develop their mind and soul. It was their chance to read and grow in wisdom. It was a day to let their spirit catch up with their bodies that they might be whole men again. You would not find them wasting the day in idleness. Philo, "Moses did not give the name of rest to mere inactivity."**

**They were active, but in away that added variety to life, and gave their inner man a chance for expression. Modern man still has not learned what the Jews had to learn the hard way. The result is increasing heart attacks, mental illness, and ignorance of the Word of God. Body, mind, and spirit**

**all suffer where the fourth commandment is not obeyed. Lord Dawson in a lecture on Some Varieties of Headache said, "So often the day of rest sees the same strenuousness and feverish activity as the day of work. It is relaxation that is needed and its lack requires study."**

**One of the reasons Christians often have serious mental, physical, and spiritual problems is due to the angelic fallacy, as Dr. Bob Smith called it. It is the false idea that we are angels rather than men, and that we do not have to obey the laws of God concerning the limits of the human body. No matter how spiritual you are, if you push yourself and do not get adequate rest, you will be an irritable person. You will not need a den in your house, for you will growl in every room. You will be hard to live with, and a poor testimony for the Lord. You will let Satan trick you with the angelic fallacy. This is the very trick he tried on Jesus. He told Jesus to jump off the temple and God would save Him. Jesus knew that was tempting God for He had to live by the laws of the flesh, and walk down the stairs like everyone else. Satan says to us that we do not need to waste time in relaxation, and when we listen and obey him we miss the benefits of God's plan of relaxation.**

**The guy who says the devil never takes a vacation and so why should I, is not being super spiritual, for that is the angelic fallacy. Satan doesn't need a vacation, but we do, for we have the limitations of flesh. If we do not obey the limitations we suffer the consequences. Dr. David H. Fink in**

**Release From Nervous Tension** says that the first step to help is learning the technique of relaxation. Man is the only creature that finds it so hard to relax that God had to make it a command.

**Worship goes hand in hand with relaxation, for it takes us into a different world where we escape the tensions and pressures of time. Worship has physical and mental, as well as spiritual values. It aids the body in relaxing. William James, the dean of American psychologists wrote an essay on the Gospel Of Relaxation. He pointed out the folly of men in trying to solve all life's problems by mental and physical labor when the answer to many of them is found in rest. He wrote, "The way to success, as vouched for by innumerable authentic personal narratives, is by...surrender...passivity, not activity--relaxation, not intentness, should now be the rule." Studies show that nearly all the discoveries in research laboratories come as hunches during a period of relaxation.**

**It is a great paradox, but we will never get as far as God wants us to go unless we stop. Standing still is the key to moving forward. Those pioneers who traveled across the country without a let up saw their animals and wagons break down from over use, but those who took a day off to rest, in obedience to the fourth commandment, were able to press on and reach their goal. God's law applies to us today, and either we learn to relax, or we will pay the penalty.**

**Rest is one of God's greatest gifts. Salvation is a form of**

**rest. Jesus said, "Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." You don't have to labor and work your way into favor with God. You need only to surrender to Christ and rest on His finished work. The peace and security of salvation is found in rest and not labor. Just as the peace of sleep does not come by clinging to the bed, but by surrender and relaxation upon the bed, so salvation does not come by our striving, but by trust in Christ and resting upon His promise. The Sabbath is a symbol of our faith and rest in Christ. Obedience to this fourth commandment is our way of saying we trust in Christ and rest on Him, and not in our own labor.**

## **6. IMAGINATION COMMANDED**

**Back in the 60's eight wrestlers took their own lives because world champion 37 year old Gohlam-Rexa committed suicide. Three of them left notes saying they could not stand the death of their idol. Almost every time a well-known person takes their own life some of their worshipers do the same. Idolatry is alive and well in our world today. We are deceived if we think idolatry is not a modern problem. It is one of the most common sins of our day.**

**So often we connect sin with sex, as if sex was the major area of human sin, but in the Ten Commandments that is number 7 on the list while idolatry is number 2. From God's**



**perspective idolatry is a greater danger than immorality because idolatry is the cause for immorality. Men would not be so immoral if they did not idolize sex.**

**When man takes a real but relative value, and makes it absolute, he perverts it. That is why idolatry is mans greatest problem, for by it he ruins, destroys, and perverts all of the good things of life. By absolutizing the relative, or by putting the good in place of the best, man distorts reality and lives a life out of balance with the laws of God. True faith is faith in the truly ultimate--it is faith in God. Idolatrous faith is a putting of ones trust in some finite reality which has been raised to the level of the ultimate.**

**If sex, science, the state, society, or superstars are made the ultimate values in our lives, they become idols. The result will be we will take these valid values and turn them into monsters of evil, for nothing can be God but God without leading men into one kind of hell or another.**

**There has been some progress in the history of idolatry. Modern man is not quite so conspicuous about it. He no longer bows before idols of wood and stone. He has become far cleverer in disguising his worship. The poet reveals one area of this higher level idolatry.**

**The heathen in his blindness  
Bows down to wood and stone.  
The Christian in his wisdom  
Bows down to gold alone.**

**Man has become more sophisticated in his folly. His idolatry is on a level that sometimes is almost noble. The old gods have been destroyed and their temples burned. Centuries ago, Edwin, the ruler of Northumbria in Britain, accepted Christ and called for an uprising against the useless gods in the temple. The high priest galloped towards the temple in the sight of all the people, and he hurled a lance into the interior where the idols were. When this sacrilege remained unpunished, the people at the command of this daring challenger of the gods proceeded to overthrow and burn the temple. These days of the glorious overthrow of visible idols are over, but the battle against idolatry continues in full force.**

**Erich Fromm, a social scientist, in his book, *The Sane Society*, writes, "Is it not time to cease to argue about God, and instead to unite in the unmasking of contemporary forms of idolatry? Today it is not Baal and Astarte but the deification of the state and of power in authoritarian countries and the deification of the machine and of success in our own culture."**

**William Jennings Bryan pointed out long ago that some forms of idolatry are on such a high level that they produce good, and that is why we are blind to their dangers. The man whose god is gold is often very industrious, zealous, and clever, and we praise him for these qualities which lead him to his success in his idolatry. The man who worships fame and does his best to attain it may do much good for the state and community. Therefore, we respect his form of idolatry.**

**We are impressed with any form of idolatry that succeeds, and so we tend to idolize success. As we study this command, therefore, we must recognize it is Gods Word for us today and not just a record of His Word to others of the past.**

**Like the First Commandment, this one has a negative and a positive side to it. And, again, the Old Testament emphasis is on the negative, whereas, Jesus emphasized the positive. The negative must come first, however, for as we said on the First Commandment, all other gods must be eliminated before concentrated devotion can be given to the one true God. So also, sensual idolatrous worship must be eliminated before man can worship God truly in spirit and in truth. Let's consider the negative first which-**

## **I. PROHIBITS IDOLATROUS OR SENSUAL WORSHIP.**

**Idolatry is basically the worship of the visible and, therefore, God prohibits any image of any likeness of anything in heaven, earth, or sea to be an aid in worship, for the aid tends to become an object of worship.**

**It is important that we recognize that true worship is what is being protected by this Second Commandment. The First Commandment was to eliminate worship of all false gods, and the Second is to eliminate all false forms of worship of the true God. In other words, it would be possible to be monotheist, and obey the First Commandment by having no other gods but Jehovah, and yet be an idolater**

by worshipping Jehovah in the form of some idol. This is exactly what happened while Moses was receiving the Ten Commandments. The people in their craving for a visible god melted all their gold and made a golden calf to represent Jehovah. Aaron proclaimed a feast to the Lord, and they worshiped and sacrificed to the golden calf as the god who brought them out of the land of Egypt. It was a symbol of the true God, but this is what is being forbidden by this Commandment, for it reduces God to the level of a visible thing.

This same thing happened when Jeroboam divided the kingdom and established a new worship in Israel. He did it so the people would not have to go into the southern kingdom of Judah to worship at Jerusalem. He was not advocating the worship of other gods and breaking the First Commandment. He was breaking the Second Commandment by setting up idols to represent the true God. In I Kings 12:28 we read, "So the king took counsel, and made two calves of gold. And he said to the people, you have gone up to Jerusalem long enough. Behold your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt."

Idolatry, we see, can be either a visible substitute for the invisible God, or a visible representation of Him who is unseen. In either case idolatry is involved only when worship or service is an issue. You are not to bow down or serve them is stressed over and over in the Old Testament. Lev. 26:1 says, "Ye shall make no graven image, neither shall ye set up any image of stone to bow down to it." Deut. 16:22 says,

**"Neither shalt thou set up any image which the Lord Thy God hateth." Ps.97:7 says, "Confounded be all they that serve graven images."**

**Even if the image represents your idea of the true God, it is wrong and folly to worship it, for God can only be dishonored by such an image. It is absurd to bow to what represents God when the One it represents is ever present. No mate would be pleased if they were ignored while great respect is given to their picture. Thomas Watson, the old Puritan, has a delightful rebuke to those who defend idols because they remind them of God. He says this is as if a woman should say she keeps company with another man to put her in mind of her husband. There is no way to justify any use whatever of any representation of God. It took Israel a long time to learn this. Watson wrote, "If you search through the whole Bible, there is not one sin that God has more followed with plague than idolatry. The Jews have a saying, that in every evil that befalls them, there is an ounce of the golden calf in it." God is a jealous God, and He will no more tolerate an idol than any man would tolerate his wife keeping the picture of a lover on their bedroom dresser. God demands loyalty of His bride, and this means no competition with visible images of any kind.**

**If you apply this Second Commandment to all contexts, regardless of their relationship to worship, you have the extreme position the Jews finally came to, as well as the Mohammedans and some Christians. Art and sculpture were forbidden entirely. There have been great musical geniuses**

**like Mozart, Beethoven, and Mendelssohn, but who ever heard of a great Jewish artist or sculptor? Their temples are without any paintings or statues. Some Christians have even refused to have their pictures taken because it produces an image. This extreme position has no support in Scripture. It is, in fact, an idolatrous exaltation of the Second Commandment to a level above the Word of God. A Jewish saying goes, "The Torah warns us not to make idols of God's commandments." This is what the extreme view of the Second Commandment does. It makes an idol of the command against idols.**

**God in this commandment prohibited sensual worship, but He did not prohibit art or sculpture. All of the statues of famous people in capitol buildings and parks are not idols, for they are not objects of worship. If people bowed to them and worshiped them they would be, but this is not likely a problem. Images are not idols unless they are connected with worship and service. God commanded that two images of Cherubim be set up to overshadow the mercy seat in the Holy of Holies. He also commanded the image of the serpent to be set up on a pole so that people could look at it and be cured when they were bitten. It just so happened that this image did become an idol to people and it had to be destroyed, but it was a legitimate image authorized by God. People can take what is not an idol and make it one. They can worship any picture or any statue, but this does not make them a violation of the Second Commandment in themselves. They can be just as legitimate as the serpent God commanded be set up for good, but people can abuse the**

**good and make it evil. Until they do so, however, the good is still good. The creative arts are to be enjoyed. God used creative men to make His temple filled with beautiful images on the walls. He is not opposed to creating beauty in things. He is only opposed to images being used to represent Him, and thus used as objects of worship. The reason for this will be clear as we consider the positive side of the commandment which-**

## **II. PROMOTES IMAGINATIVE OR SPIRITUAL WORSHIP.**

**Jesus gave us the positive side when He said, "God is spirit and those who worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth." God cannot be reduced to an object. True worship depends upon the imagination, for where anything visible is an object of worship, even if it represents the true God, it is idolatry. One of the reasons there is no authentic picture of Christ is, no doubt, the danger of idolatry. And if we had even one sliver of the real cross of Christ it would be held in reverence and be considered priceless, when in reality it would have no more value than a broken matchstick. Man has this tendency to reverence things, however, and to give to them the devotion due to God alone. The Second Commandment is given to protect man from this tendency, and lead him to a high spiritual concept of God.**

**God is Spirit and He does not want sensual worship. He wants spiritual worship. Jesus said we are to love God with**

**all our minds and souls, and this calls for a committed imagination. Imagination is essential to effective Christian worship. Leslie Weatherhead wrote, "The imagination, we must remember, is not only a faculty by which we may conjure up something that has no existence in reality, but by which we may apprehend a reality which cannot be seen. If it is scientific to use the faculty of sight to make sure of the presence of a visible person, why is it unscientific to use the faculty of imagination to realize a unseen presence?"**

**If you ask what imagination is you enter a vast field of investigation. Alex Osborn said, "It is a tough question because that word is wider than a three ring circus tent and covers wild beasts as well as tame." It has over 50 synonyms. Like so many things that are hard to define and talk about, we know about the imagination by experience. We have this faculty in us. Someone said that a bee stinger is only three tenths of an inch long--the other two inches is imagination. Imagination is that faculty that has been called the eye of the soul. In itself it is no more virtuous or skillful than the physical eye of the body. It too must be developed and trained or it can be very faulty. But this is the faculty which is to supply the images for the worship of God rather than the eye of the body.**

**If you object that mental images can be as faulty as metal ones, you are right. But the mental image is fluid, and can be changed by increased knowledge and maturity of understanding. A physical image is fixed and tends to hold back growth in our understanding of God. The image**



**degrades God and limits God to the sensual, whereas, the imagination is a wide-open field for advancement allowing man to penetrate deeper and deeper into the unseen realm of spirit and truth.**

**The Second Commandment was given to help man escape the bondage of the flesh, and to rise to the high level of spiritual fellowship. God often cannot get through to men at all because of their dead imagination. They are slaves of the invisible, and have no capacity to see the vision of spiritual values. Jesus said that we must become as little children to enter the kingdom of heaven, and certainly one of the factors involved here is the imagination. Children are open to the world of spirit. Reality is not shut up to the physical and visible for them. Macaulay said, "He who, in an enlightened and literary society, aspires to be a great poet must first become a little child." He is only echoing Christ, and is adding his testimony to the evidence that says man can never rise to the highest level of his nature if he loses his childlike imagination. God wants man to worship Him on this highest spiritual level where his imagination plays a major role.**

**Napoleon said, "Imagination rules the world." Arthur Brisbane wrote, "Like color and perfume in a flower, the fruit of a tree, imagination is the highest, noblest attribute of a human being. It is the quality that sees truths by intuition, that carries the mind flying through space, the forerunner of all useful, material achievements of human beings." If imagination is essential for material progress, how much**

**more is it essential for the advancement of the spirit?**

**The materialist likes to think he deals only with the facts, as if imagination, hope, thought, and prayer were not as much facts as bricks and bones and sticks and stones. Imagination is one of the greatest facts, for it allows man to reach out beyond his five senses into the supersensual realm. When men refuse to use this faculty for worship, and instead bring God down to the level that can be grasped by their senses, they break the Second Commandment.**

**All arguments, therefore, that seek to justify the use of images because they make it easier to worship are arguments in defense of the very thing that is forbidden. No doubt, there are impressive statues that could stimulate awe, but they would then become the objects of adoration and detract from our adoration of God. Ernest Thompson wrote, "History has shown that the use of any material symbol in worship is attended by two dangers. The first is that men lift the symbol up to the level of God; the second that they drag God down to the level of the symbol." A visual image soon becomes an end rather than a means. There is a subtle shift from faith to sight. If you must see anything to feel you have worshipped God you are in danger of the most subtle kind of idolatry.**

**True worship comes from within, and is dependent upon a sanctified imagination. The Second Commandment is a call to forsake the dependence upon the sensual and climb to the higher level of spiritual worship. If you reduce God to a**

**material image you reduce Him to time and space and have a man made god, not the God of Scripture. A material image of God locks Him into a static unchanging form and reduces the infinite to the finite. The essence of this Second Commandment is that God is infinite and it not to be locked into any finite form. He must be worshiped in spirit and in truth so that He can keep on growing in our minds as we gain more light about His nature. We are never to limit His unlimited nature, but be ever open to grow in our awareness of who God is. That is why imagination is essential to authentic worship, and why it is commanded.**

## **7.     SANCTIFICATION   COMMANDED**

**During the Civil War one company of soldiers adopted a rule that every man who swore would be required to read aloud a chapter from the Bible. While that rule was in force one private read all of Genesis and Exodus and was starting on Leviticus. The one recording the experience said he had a fine prospect of finishing the Old Testament before his three months enlistment was up. If ever there was a good thing done for a bad reason, this was it. I suspect that the Bible societies could scarcely meet the demand if this rule was in force today. Swearing and using the name of God and Christ in vain are so common today that it is hardly even shocking anymore.**

**Swearomaniacs are allowed to run loose everywhere in our society filling the air with pollution as dangerous to the soul as carbon monoxide to the body. Profanity is one of our greatest air pollution problems. It is highly contagious, and young people grow up becoming infected with it almost unconsciously. When I was a chaplain at a county jail I asked the men to think about why they swear so much. Every one of them agreed, they picked it up as children from their parents.**

**Modern novels and films spew the poisonous germs of profanity into the stream of our consciousness at a frightening rate. If somebody is not swearing somewhere in a movie it is supposedly unrealistic. As a matter of fact, it is unrealistic to portray the lives of typical people without profanity. Anyone who works among the public is aware of the impure vocabulary of modern man, and regrettably, modern women also. It use to be in poor taste to swear in the presence of a lady, but now days she is liable to beat you to it.**

**Young people are exposed to profanity from every angle. And English teacher assigned a composition to be written containing 250 words. The next day one boy stood up to read his, and said, "My uncle was driving his new car one day and he had a puncture. The other 236 words are not fit for publication." It is not likely that the teacher would let him get by with this, but it is also true that God will not let the uncle get by with his profanity. The Third Commandment has a concluding statement that says, "For**

**the Lord will not hold him guiltless who takes his name in vain." We are not dealing here with a trivial matter, but one that is extremely important from God's point of view. The Third Commandment has to be taken seriously in our day, for it is as far from being obsolete as sunshine and oxygen in this dark and polluted world.**

**The implications and applications are two numerous to cover in one message, and so we will be limiting ourselves to a practical explanation of what is involved. Like the previous commandments, this one is in a negative form, but we will see Jesus give it a positive side. Let's consider first the negative emphasis which-**

## **I. PROHIBITS PROFANITY OF SPEECH.**

**You will notice that out of ten commandments two of them deal with sins of the tongue--this one, and the ninth, concerning false witness. Here it is our tongue in relationship to God, and in the ninth, it is our tongue in relationship to man.**

**The first thing we need to see concerning taking the name of God in vain is that it is a serious sin. The tendency is to think that after all, this is a minor matter in a world plagued by war and crime and immorality. This attitude reveals the degree of our deception and the superficial nature of our understanding concerning the cause of mans depravities.**

**People often swear and say they mean nothing by it. They think that eliminates them from danger, but that is the very thing that is forbidden. To use Gods name in vain means to use it in an empty and meaningless way. If you mean nothing by it, you confess you have used it in vain. We ought never to use the holy name of God except when we mean something by it, and something worthy to be identified with His great name. What is more empty and worthless than men constantly asking God to damn someone or something? Does anyone really think that God will follow through? All they do by this empty use of God's name is heap to themselves damnation. The person who uses God's name in vain is saying that God is an empty meaningless word.**

**All other sins are by-products of the loss of respect and reverence for God. Once a man loses the sense of the holy and the sacred he has broken down the only restraint that can keep him from following his fallen nature to its logical conclusion. If a man uses Gods name in vain, and curses with the holy name of Christ, you can count on it that he will also lie, steal, cheat, and do any evil he feels necessary to accomplish his end. Nothing is sacred to a man who does not even hold the name of God to be sacred.**

**God forbids in the Second Commandment that any image be used to represent Him. God makes himself known through His names, which reveal His power, holiness, and purpose. To use His name in vain is a sign of contempt for Him and His plan of salvation. Let us no longer think of**

**profanity as a mere minor matter, a mere social blunder, an embarrassment. Profanity is a serious sin that leads to every other sin by causing the swearer to lose respect for what is right and holy. The Jews said, "Be careful, remember that the whole world trembled when God gave the Third Commandment." The seriousness becomes clearer if we consider a parallel on the earthly level.**

**Why does the law of the land prohibit disrespect for the flag of the United States? Is it not due to the fact that once you permit the highest symbol of the land and its heritage to be treated with disrespect, you open the door to every form of disloyalty? If a man despises and treats lightly the highest symbol of our country, then there is no end to the extent he will go in defiance. God's name is the highest symbol of His Person, and to use it profanely is to be guilty of an evil worse than wiping your feet on the Stars and Stripes. Yet, we hear it done daily without shock, offense, or rebuke. A man who uses the name of God in vain does as much to undermine the foundation of our freedom as a nation under God as the man who burns the flag.**

**Arnold Toynbee, possibly the greatest historian of our age, wrote, "Of the 22 civilizations that appeared in history, nineteen of them collapsed when they reached the moral state the United States is now in." One of the most patriotic things American Christians can do is to make it known to those who blindly desecrate the name of God the seriousness of this thoughtless habit to their own souls and the future of our land. If ever there was a Biblical truth with serious**

**political implications, it is this Third Commandment. People who would never dream of spitting on the flag show the same contempt toward the name of God. Calling their attention to the folly of this could save them from being their own worse enemy.**

**Profanity is not only a serious sin, it is a senseless sin. Some sins against the laws of God bring a temporary gain or satisfaction, but swearing is useless. It is all the more offensive and damnable just because it is a sin without temptation. All other sins appeal to some desire and lust within us, but using God's name in vain is to be a rebel without a cause. It is pure foolishness.**

**On record in the U.S. War Department is the following general order issued by George Washington in New York, July 1776.**

**“The General is sorry to be informed that the foolish and wicked practice of profane cursing and swearing, a vice heretofore little known in an American army, is growing into fashion. He hopes the officers will by example as well as influence, endeavor to check it, and that both they and the men reflect, that we can have little hope of the blessing of Heaven on our arms, if we insult it by our impiety and folly. Added to this, it is a vice so mean and low, without any temptation, that every man of sense and character detests and despises it.”**

**General George Washington**



**In this order Washington states the two points we are considering. He says it is both serious and senseless. Robert Kahn, a Jewish Rabbi, points out the senselessness of profanity by describing some poor benighted souls he knows who are so bankrupt in vocabulary that they must describe everything by the same word. He writes, "If they wish to tell you how fast a car was going, they say it went as fast as hell, or if they are trying to describe how slow the car in front of them is going, they say it was going as slow as hell. Something as wide as hell, narrow as hell, tall as hell, short as hell, hot as hell, cold as hell, rich as hell, poor as hell, old as hell, young as hell. Now tell me, he concluded, isn't that dumb as anything?" Such thoughtless profanity is intellectual insanity.**

**Saying "hell" is not directly taking God's name in vain, but it does so indirectly as does all such foolish speaking, for it brings disrepute upon the name of God when spoken by one professing faith in God. The New Testament says we will have to give an account for all foolish language, and it says that by our words we shall be justified and by our words we shall be condemned.**

**The negative prohibition is for the sake of the positive goal of a sanctified life in all areas. The most crucial area is the area of speech, for if a man can conquer his tongue and use it for the glory of God, the rest of his nature will also submit. In James 3:2 we read, "If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man, and able also to bridle the whole body." Speech, therefore, is the key test of a man's**

**character. If it is profane, foolish, and offensive to both God and man, you know his life and relationship to God is also a mess. This means that the sanctified life is one where the tongue is a servant of righteousness and a blessing to God and man. Thus, we see the positive aspect of this command which-**

## **II. PROMOTES PURITY OF SPEECH:**

**When we go to the New Testament for the positive, it does not mean that the Old Testament does not contain the positive, for it does. It is an obvious conclusion to come to that if you are not to take God's name in vain; you are to take it reverently. In Lev. 22:32, we find the negative and positive clearly stated together. "And you shall not profane my holy name, but I will be hallowed among the people of Israel." It is there in the Old Testament, but in a remote place. Jesus, however, puts it in a conspicuous place for all to see by making the first petition of the Lord's Prayer--"Hallowed by Thy name."**

**The Christian does not fulfill the Third Commandment by a mere negative refraining from swearing. We must fulfill the positive goal of hallowing the name of God by using it in a reverent, holy and fruitful manner. Silence is not the goal, but purity of speech, which is backed up with purity of life. The Third Commandment amounts then to a commandment of sanctification.**

**The Jews finally came to see the implication of this**

**commandment for all of life. The Jewish Talmud says, "If any act, though permitted by law, may provoke the defamation of Israel and of God, then, in spite of its abstract legality, it becomes a great sin and crime." Unfortunately they did not always practice what they knew, and Paul tells us the name of God was blasphemed among the Gentiles because of the Jews. They honored God with their lips, but profaned His name by their lives. Purity of speech is itself profanity if one's life makes mockery of the words. All the pious talk in the world is a taking of God's name in vain if the tongue does not truly express our hearts and our walk.**

**Leighton, in expounding on the phrase hallowed be Thy name says, "This is the most effectual sanctifying of His name by way of declaring it holy, when His people walk in holiness. Though you tell the world that He is holy, they know Him not; they can neither see Him nor His holiness, but when they see that there are men, taken out of the same lump of polluted nature with themselves, and yet, so renewed and changed that they hate the defilement of the world, and do indeed live holy lives in the midst of a perverse generation; this may convince them that there is a brighter spring of holiness, where it is in fullness, from which these drops are that they perceive in men; for seeing that it is not in nature there must be another principle of it, and that can be no other than the holy God. Thus is His name hallowed, and He known to be holy by the holiness of His people."**

**This means that the Third Commandment, when fully**

**obeyed, leads to the sanctification of all of life. Our speech is to be a true expression of a life being lived for the glory of God's name. It means that we must speak the truth and avoid all lies, slander, and false witness. Our honesty must be obvious, and men ought to trust our word without oaths. As Jesus said, "Let your yea be yea and your nay, nay." Yes or no ought to be sufficient for one who honors the name of God.**

**Oaths are involved here. If you use the name of God to confirm some statement, or swear it is the truth in God's name, and you do it to deceive, you drag His name down to the level of evil. Anyway in which we identify the name of God with what is less than righteous is taking His name in vain. In the Old Testament if a man let another keep his ox when he went on a journey, and the ox was stolen or ran away, when the owner returned the man who kept the ox could only swear by the name of God that he did not steal it himself. There are no witnesses and no evidence if he is lying, and so no judge can find him guilty. But the point is, God will not hold him guiltless for taking His name in vain, and using His name to cover evil. You can fool man and outwit justice, but be sure your sin will find you out. God will not be outwitted and you will pay for your misdeeds.**

**The Second Commandment forbids the linking of God to any fixed image. This Third Commandment forbids that we link His name with any idea that is unworthy of His nature. Many who would never dream of reducing God to an idol will reduce Him to a curse word, which is equally vile. We**

**double any sin that we do if we link the name of God with it. If we are prejudiced, that is a sin. If we say we are prejudiced because God wills it or it is God's plan, thus seeking to justify our sin by linking with the name of God, we sin doubly, and double will be our condemnation.**

**If you take a man's name and put it on a plaque in Westminster Abbey, or some hall of fame, you bring honor to that person by what you do with his name. If you write it on the gutter or in some disgraceful place, you show contempt for the person who bears the name. If a business can get the name of their product honored among the purchasing public they can get rich. If their products name gets a bad reputation they can go broke. So much depends upon a name. That is why one Commandment out of ten is so concerned about the name of God. If Satan can get a person to show disrespect for the name of God he has accomplished a major step in his strategy for leading that person to damnation. On the other hand, if we can bring men to respect the name of God and honor the name of Jesus, we are well on the way to leading them into a saving relationship to Christ.**

**The Catholic Church once had an organization called The Holy Name Society. They had five rules that governed them. They were, 1. To labor as individuals for the glory of God's name, and to make it known to those who are ignorant of it. 2. Never to pronounce disrespectfully the name of Jesus. 3. To avoid blasphemy, perjury, profane and indecent language. 4. To induce neighbors to refrain from all insults**

against God, and from profane and unbecoming language.  
**5. To remonstrate with those who use profane language or blaspheme in their presence.**

**Every Christian should be a member of such a society, whether formally organized or not, for it's goal is a fulfillment of the Third Commandment. The implications of this commandment covers the whole of the believers life. The Jews were led to make this unforgivable sin in Judaism. A life of disobedience to the Third Commandment was equivalent to blasphemy of the Holy Spirit. The point is, profanity is no trivial matter. For the glory of God, for the salvation of souls, and for the good of our nation, we need to respond to this call to sanctification and purity of speech and in all ways honor the name of God.**

## **8. PRESERVATION OF MARRIAGE COMMANDED**

**Actor Eli Wallach figured that his son who was approaching his teens was sharp enough to grasp some basic facts of life. So he called him in, and gave him the time-honored story about the birds and the bees. When he was all finished the boy said, "You know in a rudimentary fashion, the process you've described isn't too dissimilar to human reproduction."**

**Parents are often naive about the sex knowledge of their**

**children. They pretend that in a nation where teenage girls get pregnant by the millions, and where sex promotion oozes out of every pore of society, and where its rays flood every realm of life with its omnipresent radiation, that they still walk in the dark concerning the mechanics of sex. It is time that we wake up to the fact that we have been living in the midst of a sex revolution. Pitirim Sorokin, the great Harvard sociologist, says of this revolution: "It is changes the lives of men and women more radically than any other revolution of our time."**

**This revolution is just as serious as political and economic revolution, but it goes almost unnoticed because it is so private. Sorokin writes, "Devoid of noisy public explosion, its stormy scenes are confined to the privacy of the bedroom and involves only individuals. Unmarked by dramatic events on a large scale, it is free from civil war, class struggle, and blood shed. It has no revolutionary army to fight its enemies. It does not try to overthrow governments. It has no great leader; no hero plans it, and no politician directs it. Without plan or organization it is carried on by millions of individuals, each acting on his own."**

**Time does not permit the examination of all the evidence of the decay of the American culture. But let me give you one example. During the early period of Greek and Roman culture the figures of their deities and heroes, and especially of women, were completely draped from head to foot. In the decadent stages of their culture these same figures appeared nude, designed to stimulate the sex drive. The same pattern**

**was followed in music, the stage, and literature, until sex dominated the culture, and brought them to ruin. It is the same old story over and over. Sex is a beautiful servant, but a beastly master. Yet in spite of all the history of man's folly and its consequences in relation to sex, the American people are traveling that same road. It is true, "All men ever learn from history is that men never learn from history."**

**The seventh commandment is not just relevant; it is essential for the very survival for our culture. As important as it is, however, the church has not given it an adequate place in its teaching. D. L. Moody said, "I would to God I could pass over this commandment, but I feel the time has come to cry aloud and spare not." Most preachers feel like Moody, but the difference is most do pass over it. I read 36 different preachers, scholars, and professors, on this commandment. All but a handful beat around the bush and just preached a gentle sermon on marriage and family life. To deal with it realistically you must be frank almost to the point of embarrassment.**

**There are those who feel you should not preach on the seventh commandment at all for fear of giving people ideas. These objectors know the power of sex, and know that a sermon on adultery could tempt the listeners to the very act that is condemned. I have read sermons describing David's affair with Bathsheba, and wondered if the authors purpose was to stir up jealousy in the reader that he was not David, rather than pity for David that he was a victim of uncontrolled sex.**



**The objectors have a point, but it is dulled by the fact that the Bible itself is not shy on the subject of sex. It is so frank and specific in parts that it stimulates the same emotions as a sex novel or seductive film. There is no point in trying to pretend sex is an incidental and insignificant part of life. It is a major and powerful force in the life of every healthy human being. It is the area of the greatest temptation to sin. R. H. Charles writes, "Other sins, such as theft, arson, perjury, murder, make no appeal to the normal healthy mind. You may read countless tales of such crimes in the daily press and not be tempted in the least to become a thief, or incendiary, a perjurer, or a murderer, because in healthy minds the desire leading to such crimes are absent, and the tales of such crimes create only abhorrence. But it is otherwise in regard to the sins of the flesh. Every healthy human being is influenced, and rightly influenced, by the attraction of sex."**

**This being the case, as we all recognize, we must follow the advice of McAfee who said, "One must plead for a pure heart even when there is danger that the very plea will stir up impure depths." Our primary concern is not to give a lecture on sex education, but to stress the Biblical attitude toward sex. The attitude we have and convey to others, especially to our children, is more important than biological information. Even the Kinsey report concluded that imparting all the facts about sex to people does not in itself determine how they will act in the use of sex. It says that attitude alone determines patterns of behavior. The parents, by their attitudes, are the real determiners of the sex**

**behavior of their youth.**

**You may never sit down and explain sex to your child, but you are teaching attitudes all the time, and this is what is the determining factor. In his book, How To Tell Your Child About Sex, Clyde M. Naramore, the well known Christians psychologist writes, "Parents often say to me Dr. Naramore do you know of a good book about sex education? Our boy (or girl) is nearly 13 and we want to tell him the facts of life. Questions like this would be humorous if they weren't so unfortunate. Evidently these parents do not realize that they have been giving their children sex education for years. The very fact that they have not talked with them tells these children that sex is something to avoid discussing. And of course, 13 years of age is much too late to begin. By then, some of the most important and most impressive years of life have already passed."**

**The implications of the seventh commandments would get us into all the realms of sex behavior, but for now we can only look at the primary purpose of the commandment. The positive principle underlying this negative forbidding of sex relations with any other person than your mate is, the preservation of marriage. Next to a man's life his most precious possession is his wife. To take either his life or his wife was punishable by death in the Old Testament. Israel could not survive, nor can any nation, where there is a loss of respect for life and marriage. Obedience to this commandment involves a development of the highest respect for marriage, and a deep sense of loyalty to one's mate. The**

**marriage vows of forsaking all others, and keeping yourself unto him or her alone are not just thrown in to lengthen the service, they are the most solemn vows two people can make to each other.**

**Adultery is so evil, because it is a breaking of a major promise of life. When you get married you promise not to have sex with anyone else. You do not promise that you will never notice another man or woman. You do not promise you will not lust after another person. You do not even promise that you will not feel romantically attracted to another person. All of these things may happen in the course of life. If they did not, there would be no need for the promise. The promise that you make in marriage is that you will keep yourself just for each other so long as you both shall live. It is a commitment to devote all of your sexual energy to the loving of your mate. That is a marital right every partner has a right to expect. However sexual hunger is provoked, a mate is to release that energy only with their partner. That is God's plan and it is a beautiful plan.**

**Why then do so many chose to release their sex energy outside of marriage. Dr. Leon Saul in his book, Fidelity and infidelity, after a great deal of research, came to this conclusion: "...I do not think that a man or woman carries on an outside affair that pains his spouse and children, damages them, in some part destroys them, unless there is a powerful undercurrent of hostility against them, however conscious or unconscious this may be." In other words, the same emotion that makes the sixth commandment necessary**

**is what makes the seventh necessary-hostility. It will make you kill your neighbor, or kill your marriage. Hostility toward your mate is what allows people to permit lust to get out of control. If you are not hostile toward your mate you will keep lust under control. People full of anger wish to hurt someone, and they will be strongly tempted to hurt their mate by infidelity.**

**On the practical level this means that mates have an obligation to go all through life enriching their relationship. They need to learn how to communicate so that hostility is dealt with, and never permitted to go unresolved. Many studies reveal that middle age people become unfaithful because they feel a need to demonstrate that they are still attractive to the opposite sex. This hunger to be attractive would not get so out of hand if mates would build each other's self-esteem, and continue to be sexually romantic. A dull, boring, routine sex life is a sin, and a violation of the seventh commandment, because it produces the factors that lead to its violation. Love is the fulfilling of the law, and loving mates will so satisfy each other that there will be no reason to be tempted by adultery. What can Satan do if everything he has to offer you in sin, you already have within your marriage?**

**Paul gives Christians the key to reducing the risk of immoral sex in I Cor. 7. Paul's advice is for every mate to make sure that the sex drive of their partner is satisfied on a regular basis. This may vary greatly, but whenever the desire is present, it should be satisfied. This may call for**

**learning a great deal about sex technique. Most all of the cases I know where a Christian mate becomes unfaithful, the basic cause is right here. They were not sexually satisfied, and it could have all been prevented by better understanding of the need and way to satisfy it. Adultery appeals to a hunger, and there is little danger if that hunger is already met in marriage. Paul is saying that if you have rocks in your bed, you have rocks in your head, for you are giving Satan a foot in the door to destroy your marriage. Mates must give a lifetime of thought and action to keep the romance of sex a vital part of their relationship.**

**Marriage is similar to conversion in that, in conversion we make a commitment of our lives to one Lord, and in marriage we commit our lives to one mate. Sex and salvation are linked all through the Bible. God had His bride of Israel, and Christ has His bride, the church. Any disloyalty and idolatry in these relationships is called adultery. The marriage bond of two people is the very first human relationship. Adam was created first, and so the God man relationship was the first relationship with man. Then Eve was created, and the first fully human relationship was that of man and wife. Next to life itself, therefore, marriage is the most sacred possession we have.**

**God's first gift to Adam was life, and His second gift was a wife. It is not, cleanliness is next to godliness, but marriage is next to godliness. To treat it lightly, or to shatter it through an act of adultery is to be guilty of the worst of sins against God, man, and society. Adultery is wrong not**

**because sex is wrong, but because sex outside of marriage shows a disrespect for the highest human bond. It murders this highest relationship, and the murder of a marriage is just as serious as the murder of a person. This does not mean that adultery is the unforgivable sin, for Jesus had compassion on the woman caught in the very act. He forgave her while condemning the men who wanted to see her punished. He knew the hearts of men, and knew that everyone of them had lust in their hearts. Jesus said that those without sin should cast the first stone, and they all left, for everyone of them was guilty.**

**We cannot have a stern inflexible attitude toward those guilty of this sin. Christians who are suffering because of a blunder in this area of life need to recognize that marriage is the basic value to be preserved, and if it can be, both partners are obligated to work for a healing of the shattered bond for all they are worth. I have talked with a number of people guilty of this sin, and not a one understands why they were so foolish. Everyone of them regrets it, and would give anything not to have fallen. Christ forgives, the mate forgives, but the hardest part of all is to forgive yourself. The scar remains, and can become a cause for conflict at any time. Nevertheless, the Christian attitude is to be one of striving for the preservation of marriage. There will be a Sahara desert period to go through, but the struggle will pay off, and with the attitude of high respect for marriage, the two can arrive again at the oasis of happiness. If the grace of Christ can heal the broken relationship of God and man, it can heal the next highest relationship also, that between**

**husband and wife. One of the most important things you can do for the glory of God, for the strengthening of the church and nation, is to obey this seventh commandment for the preservation of marriage.**

## **9. PRESERVATION OF PROPERTY COMMANDED**

**The teacher said to the little boy who had stolen an apple from another boy's lunch pail, "Don't you know that you broke the eighth commandment?" "Yes," he responded, "But I figured I might just as well have the apple and break the eighth commandment as covet it and break the tenth." The truth that is immediate evident in this incident is that the human ability to rationalize about sin, and even use the Scripture to support it, is unusually keen. A mother caught her little girl in the cookie jar after she had been forbidden to take any. The mother said as she caught her in the act of petty thief, "What commandment is being broken here?" The little girl said, "Suffer little children to come unto me and forbid them not."**

**It is this keen ability to rationalize that makes us fearful of the new morality line on the eighth commandment. We do not disagree with the principle that the lesser of two evils is the best choice. If the little boy who stole the apple would have followed this principle, he would have chosen to be guilty of coveting rather than stealing. Often we have been guilty of leading people to sin by teaching that all sins are**

**equal. A person with this attitude easily yields to temptation. He figures if he desires to sin, and that is as bad as doing the sin, then he has nothing to lose by acting out his desire, for he is already guilty.**

**It is important that we give our youth protection against this kind of reasoning. There are degrees and various levels of offense. Some are punished by death, while others require only fines or restitution, and still others are resolved through repentance. A sin such as coveting remains a matter between you and God, and it can be forgiven by confessing, but to act on the coveting, and steal, becomes a crime against man. This calls for a settlement on that level, plus repentance before God, and it can involve imprisonment as well as restitution. All sins make you a sinner, but only some sins make you a criminal. All violations of the Ten Commandments are not equal. There is such a thing as a lesser of two evils.**

**If a man is going to shoot his neighbor, and I know it, and steal his gun, I turn stealing into a virtue, for I preserve life in obedience to the sixth commandment, and I prevent an unjust killing. If a busload of school children is stalled on a track, and a train is coming, there are many ways in which I might steal, or be destructive to the property of others in order to stop the approaching train. It could be as minor as taking a sheet from a nearby wash line, and running down the track waving it. I could be as radical as taking someone's car and stopping it on the track to halt the train before it hit the bus. In any case, you would be a hero, and**



**what ever you did would be considered a virtue rather than a vice.**

**The problem comes when people pervert this reality. For example, what of the man who stole from his neighbor because he loved him? Love is the absolute he argues, and so he reasons that his neighbor is becoming too materialistic. So, in true love for him he decides to remove the false foundation of materialism that he is resting on. He begins to steal his possessions in the hope that his neighbor will begin to seek a more spiritual foundation for his life. Such is the power of rationalization.**

**The logic of the new morality has hit our nation at a time when it is least needed. Stealing has already been so minimized as a serious moral offense that it is fast becoming the All-American sport. Everyone is playing the game. In a article titled, Stealing Their Way Through College, it is brought out that the major problem of the National Association Of College Stores is the problem of shrinkage. They haven't determined if the motive is love or not, but students from every kind of college and university are relieving them of millions of dollars worth of merchandise without paying for it. I once counseled with a girl in a Christian college who stole several hundred dollars worth of clothing and cosmetics in one semester.**

**In one large Ivy League University the bookstore loses \$90,000 a year to student heisters. The worse case was that of a divinity school graduate student caught lifting a Bible.**

**If he would have gotten by with it, he might have considered it an answer to prayer. This is just how weak the American conscious is on the matter of stealing. Youth is on a shop lifting spree, but the facts indicate they are only following the example established by adults. It is fantastic the amount to stealing adults do. In Luther's day he said, "Only a small portion of thieves are hanged. If all were hanged where would we get rope enough?" In our day, the statistics indicate we would also run out of trees on which to hang people. It is so universal that almost everyone is guilty in some degree.**

**S. J. Curtis, a professional security consultant, says there are more than 150,000 shopliftings a week, costing store owners billions annually. A report in the Chicago Tribune Magazine said that 90% of this is done by housewives, and 1/4 of it is done in the Christmas season. Stealing has become a part of the American way of life to millions of average citizens. It use to be that when an officer apprehended a youth in the act of thief, he would burst into tears. This day is gone, and now the typical response is one of arrogance and defiance, as if they had a right to engage in thievery unhindered. So low is the level of respect for the property of others that even the police have decided to play what's yours is mine. Police scandals are not uncommon, and where insurance is involved even the robbed join the game.**

**Ralph Smith, in the book The Tarnished Badge, tells of how policeman who burglarized stores were rewarded by the**

**owner. One owner, not knowing the investigating officer was the one who robbed said, "Here, take this radio home to your wife, it's insured, and I'll simply include it in the thief list." Even if the policeman had not been the original thief, both he and owner were thieves in robbing the insurance company.**

**Christians get caught up in stealing, and hardly even know it. They feel free to steal music and literary material that is copyrighted. Employees steal over three billion a year from their employers. Fifteen percent of our cost for most everything is due to the need to regain the losses from stealing. Seventy percent of inventory losses are by employees, and only fifteen percent by shoplifting. It is an inside job. It is so easy and so popular. Studies show that when the top management people are honest, the employees are too. But if these top people are not honest, it is contagious, and will spread to all below them. The rich are into it too. I read of a highly respected woman who fired her maid because she was caught stealing her Waldorf-Astoria, and Conrad Hilton towels. Believe it or not, 500,000 grocery carts disappear from supermarkets every year.**

**Time does not permit us to consider the endless ways by which people steal. The reason very few sermons are preached on this commandment is that when you get through examining all of the ways it is violated, practically everyone is guilty and stands condemned. Robert Kahn, the Jewish author writes, "Not one of the Ten Commandments is so frequently broken, bent, skirted, evaded, sidestepped,**

**or ignored. There are hundreds of ways to steal.... The dictionary contains dozens and dozens of nouns, adjectives, and verbs that have to do with dishonest dealing with property. You can steal by burglary, by larceny, by embezzlement. You can steal by robbery, by highjacking, by shoplifting, by picking pockets, by plagiarizing. You can gyp, lift, loot, nip, pinch, pluck, pilfer, snatch, and swindle."**

**Really, all of the commandments are dealing with some form of stealing. If you do not keep the first, you rob God of His right to first place in your life. If you do not keep the fourth you rob yourself of God's blessing of rest. If you do not keep the fifth you rob mom and dad of the honor do them. If you break the sixth you rob men of life. If you break the seventh you rob your mate of a happy marriage. If you break the ninth you rob men of their reputation. Almost all sin is some form of stealing in which you rob God, your neighbor, or yourself of some great value. If you think you are not a thief, it is because you have thought in too narrow a range about this commandment.**

**You may not steal your neighbor's property, but you may still be a thief of his time. If you waste people's time when they prefer to get on with other obligations, you are stealing a part of their life. There are people who are committing murder on the installment plan by stealing a chunk of other people's lives almost daily. If it is mutually acceptable there is no problem, but if you take a person's time, and they do not will to give it, it is stealing. If you do not pay a man for**

**service performed in a reasonable time, it is robbery. The Old Testament demanded that a laborer be paid the very day he worked. To withhold it was considered a serious sin. History is filled with businesses who have gone bankrupted because customers did not pay for their service or product. It is a wide spread form of stealing.**

**The paradox is, this is the one commandment that has almost universal acceptance. All peoples condemn stealing in principle. Even a thief hates to be robbed. Why then is it so prevalent in practice? Because of ignorance about the nature of property, which leads to a loss of respect for property. When there is a loss of respect for life, murder increases. When there is a loss of respect for marriage adultery increases. When there is a loss of respect for property stealing increases. Force is futile, and will never solve the problem. Men will only cease to steal when they come to understand, respect, and obey the principle behind the eighth commandment. That principle is, the preservation of property, or the right of ownership.**

**Someone said that stealing is of the devil because property is of God. It would take hours just to read all of the passages in the Bible that deal with God's concern for the rights of all men to own property. The whole economic system of Israel was set up to make sure no one could get a monopoly and deprive others of their ownership of land. Land was distributed to all the tribes according to their number, so each family got a share. There would always be those who failed and went into debt to others, but every 50th**

**year was a year of Jubilee, and all land was to be returned to its original owners so that no family would ever be permanently dispossessed. This was an ideal, and was often violated, but we see what God intended. Every man was to have property he could call his own, for only then could he be a good steward of what God had given him. Any society that deprives people of their right to own property denies them of the God given right to be God's stewards.**

**In the New Testament we find that the followers of Jesus were often property owners. Mary and Martha and Lazarus had a lovely home where Jesus enjoyed staying. Mary sacrificed an expensive jar of perfume to anoint Jesus. It was her own to do with as she chose. The early churches began in the homes of the more wealthy disciples. Without the property holders in the early church there would have been great handicaps, but they were there, and gave their possessions to build the church. The success of the church has always depended upon the right of Christians to own property, and to devote that property for the extension of God's kingdom on earth.**

**In the 14th century the Catholic Church tended to feel that non-believers had no right to private property. One author wrote, "He who is not subject to God, justly loses and unjustly possesses all that he has from God." This led to the church taking the property of unbelievers. The same thing happened in the Spanish Inquisition. The church became wealthy by theft. Since the church controlled the government, it was legal theft. The official Catholic position,**

**however, is that private ownership is a universal right. Saint Thomas Aquinas, their master theologian, said, "Unbelief in itself is not incompatible with the right to own and to rule...." Pope Leo the 13th in 1891 said, "Every man has the right by nature to possess property as his own."**

**This has always been the Protestant position, assuming that the property was gained in an acceptable manner. No man has the right to retain what he has gained by theft. Legitimate ownership is to be respected by all men however. This principle was so basic to a sound society that God demanded of the Jews that they even respect the property of their enemy. In Ex. 23:4-5 we read, "If you meet your enemies ox or ass going astray, you shall bring it back to him. If you see the ass of one who hates you lying under its burden, you shall refrain from leaving him with it, you shall help him to lift it up." Respect for property was so important that God judged all of Israel, and condemned to death a whole family, because Achan stole from an enemy on the battlefield. The preservation of property is important to God because it is important for the good of man.**

**In the Old Testament every farmer had an obligation to leave the corners of his field unharvested. This was his contribution to the welfare system for the poor of his day. The Christian steward is to acknowledge God as the rightful owner of all his possessions, and seek to use them in a way that pleases God. If the right to own is not God given, but a man made right, then man can also deprive men of this right. This is the philosophy of Communism. Stealing is**

**wrong because ownership is right, and ownership is right because God has ordained it. Obedience to the eighth commandment, like all of the rest, is essential to the good life, and the good society. The most patriotic thing Christians can do is to live by the principles of the Ten Commandments.**

**As Christians, we know we are not saved by the Ten Commandments, but by personal trust in Jesus Christ as our Savior. Yet we dare not overlook the fact that a corporate salvation, in terms of being saved from the loss of our national blessings and freedoms, depends upon the moral character of the people. Had there been ten righteous men in Sodom, it would have escaped the wrath of God. Let us never underestimate the importance of any man's obedience to the Ten Commandments. Everyone counts, and so let us pray that we will be the salt of the earth, and avoid the many ways of stealing. Bernard Shaw said, "A gentlemen is one who puts more into life than he takes out of it. Otherwise he is a thief." May God help us to be as concerned as God is for the preservation of property.**

## **10. PRESERVATION OF TRUTH COMMANDED**

**An unusual trial took place in London in 1670. The defendant was none other than the founder of Pennsylvania, William Penn. He was the leader of the Society Of Friends, known as the Quakers, and he was charged with inciting a**



**riotous, seditious assembly. Parliament had made the Quakers an object of persecution, and the judges were in accord with the conspiracy against this religious minority. The jury was ordered to agree on a verdict of guilty before the trial began. Fortunately, the jury had a mind of its own, and returned the judgment, guilty of speaking aloud on Grace Church Street. For this, of course, there was no penalty.**

**The judge was outraged, and refused to accept the verdict. He sent them back to reconsider. When they returned again with the same verdict in writing, the judge lowered the boom on them and said, "You will not be dismissed until we have a verdict acceptable to the Court, and you shall be locked up without meat, drink, fire and tobacco, and no one may communicate with you. We will have the verdict, or you shall starve." The jurors in defiance, after several days of imprisonment, reversed their decision to not guilty. The judge became increasingly brutal, but could not break them. The Court finally dismissed the jury after fining them forty marks per man, and imprisonment until paid. William Penn was jailed on a contrived contempt of court charge, and returned to the Newgate Prison.**

**This historical incident demonstrates that loyalty to the truth does not always lead to immediate justice. Nevertheless, it is the only hope of ever having justice at all. Those who refuse to bare false witness in obedience to God, rather than lie in obedience to the state were actually the**

**greatest friends of the state, for when all such people are gone, the state has no future, but that of enduring the wrath of God.**

**The courts require witnesses to swear to tell the truth. They make it a crime not to tell the truth. So the truth is absolutely essential to any system of justice. Every nation has recognized this, and that is why perjury is universally condemned and severely punished. God knew Israel could not be a united people, and a representative of the God of justice, if truth was not honored among them. Therefore, we have the ninth commandment, which makes the preservation of truth one of the basic principles necessary for a good society. The whole legal, social, and moral fabric of society will unravel in utter chaos without the thread of truth running through it.**

**This is another reason why Americans have good reason to fear for the future of our nation. The credibility gap is a big topic in our day. It means that there is so much lying going on that we don't even know for sure if the credibility gap is a fact or a lie. Spurgeon said, "If all men's sins were divided into two bundles, half of them would be sins of the tongue." Just listen to a partial list of the sins of the tongue.**

**Lying, calumny, slander, misrepresentation, contumely, insult, scurrility, railing, detraction, whispering, backbiting, false witness, deprecation, vilification, insinuation, abuse, tattle, insolence, sneering, taunting, jives, jeers, defamation, libel, satire, sarcasm, lampoon, censoriousness, slashing**

**criticism, surmising, attributing motives, and last but not least, gossip.**

**That is an impressive array of weapons which the tongue has to use in the battle for evil. These weapons are not just used by politicians, but by everybody. Paul writes to the Christians at Corinth in II Cor. 12:20, "I fear that perhaps I may come and find you not what I wish.....That perhaps there may be quarreling, jealousy, anger, selfishness, slander, gossip, conceit, and disorder." The church has never been without its storehouse of sins of the tongue. Therefore, the study of the ninth commandment is directed at ourselves, and not just those of the world. Let's consider first,**

**1. PERJURY. This is a voluntary violation of an oath. The subtlety with which men can bear false witness is amazing. A case reported in a popular magazine revealed how even the truth can be used for bearing false witness. The case dealt with a will that was being contended based on the deceased not being right in the head. Testimony was given that he put his head between the curtains dividing the living and dining room and cried, "Baaa, I'm a billy goat." This was true, but as further probing brought out, it was while playing with his grandchildren. True statements designed to mislead are just as much lies as outright falsehoods.**

**No system of law will lead to justice when perjury is a common practice, and this seems to be the case in our land today. Mr. Samuel Untermyer says, "Perjury has become so**

general as to taint and well-nigh paralyzed the administration of justice." A judge of the supreme court of New York declared, "We have reached the point where we merely try to find out which side is lying most." Law and justice cannot operate without morality. As the church has less and less influence in America, the standard of morality falls lower and lower, and the result will be that the values that made us great will eventually be completely eroded. If the practice of false witness was limited to the courts it would be bad enough, for God hates injustice. But it is not confined to the courtroom. It evades all of life so that people in general feel no guilt at all in practicing-

**2. MISREPRESENTATION.** There are numerous ways to bear false witness through misrepresentation, and advertising agencies are experts on most of them. It is a science, this technique of deceiving people into thinking they are getting a bit of paradise with every box of soap or every brand of beer. This aspect of false witness we could go on blasting for the rest of the hour, but that would be a waste of time. Let's look at the way you and I play lightly with the truth.

Almost all of us like to speak with authority, and so we tend to give the impression that our opinion is supported by a world wide pole. We throw out judgments and evaluations of people, groups, and ideas, without a shred of first hand evidence, or personal research. We appeal to that world famous authority on all matters-They. Ella Wheeler Wilcox wrote,

**Have you ever heard of the terrible family They,  
And the dreadful venomous things They say?  
Why, half of the gossip under the sun,  
If you trace it back, you will find begun  
In that wretched House of They.**

**When we as Christians speak with no more authority than an appeal to They, we are salt without flavor, and do nothing to strengthen the grip of truth in our society. Henry A. Luce, editor-in-chief of Time, Life, and Fortune, said, "The most dangerous fault in American life today is the lack of interest in truth." There are very few people who prefer truth to their prejudices, and other self-centered values of life. My perspective is all that counts. Life is competitive, and so I must advance at the expense of others. To misconstrue, misquote, or quote out of context, or exaggerate, or anything whereby I cause another to lose favor, is legitimate in the task of winning favor for myself. This is the attitude of people in general, and Christians do not stand out as impressively unique and different.**

**Christians have been far more influenced by materialism than they are aware of. Biblical morality puts persons on the highest level of values. All of these last commandments are concerned with protecting the rights of persons. Jesus summed them up in the statement of loving our neighbor as ourselves. The commandments we have been looking at deal with the tangible man: His family, his wife, his life, and his property. It is easy to observe if you have killed him or stolen his car. But now, with this commandment, we have**

**entered into the realm of his personality. If you hit him with a car or piece of steel, the scar will show, but if you speak lies against him, there is tangible or visible injury, it is a matter of the spirit. You have attacked the inner man when you break this commandment. Honor, reputation, and dignity are invisible, but very real values that you can steal from him by mere words. Shakespeare wrote,**

**Who steals my purse steals trash;  
Tis something, nothing--  
But he that filches from me my good name  
Robs me of that which not enriches him,  
And makes me poor indeed.**

**The danger of libel lurks everywhere for new reporters. If someone is arrested and they write an article which says Murderer Captured, or Forger Arrested, and that man is not found guilty of the crime, he can sue the reporter for libel, for he bore false witness against him by calling him a murderer or forger, when there was no such thing proven. The courts have said a man reputation is to be protected, and the only way you can escape libel is to prove what you have said is true. If you speak the truth, however unpleasant it may be, you cannot be sued for libel.**

**Materialism focuses on the value of matter. It's stress is on accuracy in dealing with things. We must, of course be precise in a scientific world, for inaccuracy can cause a great calamity. We would not tolerate a scale or ruler that bore false witness to weight or length. Yet, when it comes to**

persons we feel no such urgency to be totally accurate. We can speak about persons carelessly, haphazardly with unfounded implications and sloppy thinking in general. Our words often reveal our true value system. If we care more about being accurate when we speak of atoms than of people, we are materialists at heart, and Christians morality is only a veneer.

There is nothing sacred about protons, neutrons, velocity, and mass, yet men will stop at no sacrifice of time and effort to be accurate in their description of them. Yet, they will speak lies and bear false witness against another person who is of infinite value, and made in the image of God. Men would not think of putting an inaccurate label on a chemical in a lab, but they think nothing of putting a slanderous label on a person whom they don't even know, just because it suits their prejudice to do so.

May God help us to avoid both the practice, and the being a victim, of this kind of false witness. It undermines the whole concept of the value of persons and truth. We can be a party to the evil of false witness by giving ear to slander and then passing it on. It is unfair to draw conclusions about people from second hand sources, for the party through whom you receive the information may be a false witness against the person in question. It is even immoral to draw conclusions from first hand information that the person himself would not consent to. We dare not draw conclusions from labels, unless the person using them defines what he means.

**People do not always follow out their beliefs to their logical conclusion. Therefore, it is false witness to hold them accountable for all that their views could lead to. A person may believe that it is okay to persecute heretics, but this does not prove he would do it. It works the other way too. A man can believe it is essential to control his temper, and yet be a hot head himself. Conviction and conduct do not necessary coincide, and it is wrong for us to assume they do, and declare it to be so in anyone's case where we do not know this to be a fact. R. H. Charles says it is even false witness to state a fact about another's conduct or conviction if the basis for it is an exceptional situation. He writes, "We should not strain a man's words to his disadvantage, nor draw conclusions from any unfortunate expression that may have fallen from his lips in some passing heat or some unguarded moment."**

**We cannot begin to consider the many other ways we must avoid false witness, but we can see it calls for constant evaluation of our values, and constant vigilance over our tendency to follow the values of the secular society. The new morality says that it is not always wrong to lie, deceive and give false impressions. There is some Biblical basis for this perspective, but it is the exception and not the rule. Solomon acted like he was going to divide the baby, and by doing so, he forced each of the two women to show their true colors, and thereby, discover the true mother. Could the woman who was lying about the baby accuse Solomon of immoral deception? Not hardly. Rahab told a lie to protect the spies of Israel, and she was not condemned for her**



**deception. From these situations the idea has developed that when a person has no moral right to the truth, it is legitimate to lie to them and deceive them.**

**Law enforcement justifies deception of criminals on this basis, that being criminals, they have no moral right to the truth. The problem is, it contradicts the right to be considered innocent until proven guilty. Who determines when someone has no moral right to the truth? There is no doubt that sometimes withholding the truth is beneficial for the cause of good, but it is risky to make this judgment in very many situations. The early Christians could have saved their lives by denying Christ. It could have been a mere lie and act of deception to put incense on an altar. These acts could have been done to deceive the pagans who were persecuting them. They chose, however, to die rather than to lie to those who had no moral right to the truth. They chose to suffer the consequences of truth rather than gain the cheap victory of falsehood. Eldon Trueblood wrote, "The only possible excuse for falsification of any kind is that of loyalty to persons, in that they might be harmed if the falsification did not occur."**

**Technically the ninth commandment is not dealing with lying in general, but with the specific type of lie called false witness. This led to the death penalty in the Old Testament. So all can agree that false witness is an absolute wrong, but the issue of whether it is ever right to lie is open to debate. The example is frequently cited of the angry criminal or madman who is demanding some**

**information, and if he gets the wrong answer he is going to kill someone. In that situation it seems only right that he should be lied to, for the preservation of life. In the case of war no one has an obligation to tell the enemy the truth about secrets of his side of the conflict. If a thief asks where your valuables are, are you obligated to tell him, or would a lie be permissible? What right does one who is breaking a commandment have to your cooperation in doing so? By your obedience to one you aid him in breaking another. We can see the question, is a lie ever justifiable, is a complex issue, and every Christian has to be convinced in his own mind about what is right.**

**There may be cases where a lie is the lesser of two evils, but to stress this among a people who are not loyal to the principle of the preservation of truth is to play right into the hands of the relativist and rationalists. They will pervert it for the service of evil. Long before the new morality men have considered the idea of the necessary lie. That is, a lie that is necessary to avoid violating a major, or earlier, moral obligation. It is a lie that may be necessary for the preservation of life. Those who held this view were aware of its dangers and abuses. The fact is, it is rare, and to rationalize that it is a tool that can be used often makes one a dangerous person. Let us pray with the poet:**

**O let me never speak  
What bounds of truth exceedeth;  
Grant that no idle word  
From out my mouth proceedeth;**

**And grant, when in my place  
I must and ought to speak,  
My words do power and grace,  
Nor let me wound the weak.**

**If this is not our prayer, it had better be our practice, for by our words we shall be justified, and by words we shall be condemned. I have no doubt that one of the greatest causes for Christians to suffer judgment will be the violation of this commandment. I read widely and I know it is a major Christian weakness to bear false witness, and try to make other Christians look bad. My own feelings are expressed by that old saint Dr. A. B. Simpson who said, "Rather would I play with the fork lightening or take in my hand a living wire, with it fiery current, then speak a reckless word against any servant of Christ, or idly repeat the slanderous darts which thousands of Christians are hurling on others, to the hurt of their own souls and bodies."**

**Most Christians go their whole life and do not break some of the commandments, but it is not likely that anyone even gets through childhood without breaking this one. We talk so much about other people. We are all mini versions of the National Enquirer. It makes us look better when we put others down. It makes us feel better to know bad things to say about others, especially when we are jealous or envious of them. The paradox is, though it is the most frequently broken commandment, it is seldom to never confessed. Tampering with the truth is so much a part of life that we no longer even feel guilty about it. One little guy asked his**

**mom, "Do people who tell lies go to heaven?" She said, "Certainly not." "Gosh," said the child, "It must be awful lonesome up there with only God and George Washington," A student was asked to define a lie and he said, "A lie is an abomination unto the Lord, but a very present help in time of trouble."**

**It is important that we recognize this is a popular sin, and that all of us are guilty in one way or another. It is important that we recognize we are masters at rationalizing when we defend our breaking of this commandment. If we are aware of these things we will be more likely to feel some guilt, and be more in conformity to God's purpose for this commandment, which is the preservation of truth.**

## **11. LAST BUT NOT LEAST**

**A French taxi cab driver once played a joke on Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, the creator of Sherlock Holmes. He had driven Sr. Arthur from a station to a hotel, and when he received his fare he said, "Merci, Mr. Conan Doyle." "Why, how do you know my name?" asked Sr. Author. "Well sir," he replied, "I have seen in the papers that you were coming from the South of France to Paris; your general appearance told me that you were English; your hair had been clearly last cut by a barber of the South of France. I put these indications together and guessed at once that it was you." Sir Author was astounded and said, "So little evidence to go**

**on. This is very remarkable." "Well," said the driver, "There was also the fact that your name was on your luggage."**

**This clue, though mentioned last, was far from the least. Often this is the case, and we have a saying to express it, "last but not least." Sometimes we save the best for the last. However, we also tend to associate the last with the least. We attach degrees of merit and value to position. The bottom man on the totem pole is a phrase we use to describe a negative position. When a list of names is made up, it is necessary to put them in alphabetical order or someone will be offended by being further down the list, or most humiliating of all, they could be last on the list. Last is associated with least so often, this could be interpreted as a slam at your personal worth.**

**This is subjective nonsense, of course, but it is a fact, and therefore, it is good for us to see the last from another perspective. We ought not to have a stereotyped negative attitude about last things on a list. This false attitude has affected peoples interest and concern about the last commandment. It is the commandment least preached on. After indexing hundreds of volumes of sermons I have not found a single sermon on this text. I must confess that I also felt a tendency to by pass it. If it was the fourth or fifth I am sure this feeling would not arise, but being tenth and last, it gets associated with the concept of the least important. It takes a conscious effort to overcome this false perspective, and discover that the last is not the least. This caboose on**

**the train of duty is of primary importance, and is essential if we hope to live the righteous life.**

**Paul in the great love chapter writes, "Now abideth faith, hope, love these three, but the greatest of these is love." Love is last, but it is not least. It is, instead, the greatest. The last days of Jesus are the days of greatest value, and they fill the bulk of the Gospel records. More sermons are preached on His last words than on all the others. It is the last, the end, the conclusion, the climax, that gives meaning to all that has gone before. The last is not least in God's listings of values.**

**So it is with the last of the ten commandments. It is not least, but goes deeper than the rest. It gets to the heart of the matter of sin by getting to the heart of men of sin. This commandment takes us behind the scenes to the very origin of sin. If we heed this one we can nip sin in the bud before it bears any of its bitter fruit. This is the commandment of prevention. Moody called this the root extraction. It gets at the root of sin which is covetousness. Paul said that the love of money is the root of all evil. It is not money that is evil, but the love of it. The covetousness that turns one to an idolater. If a man does not stop sin at its root, he will be led to violate all of the other commandments. A Jewish commentary says, "He who violates the last commandment, violates all of them."**

**If covetousness is not brought under control it will lead to idolatry, for desire becomes the highest value in your life,**

**and thus, your God. If you fail in number ten, all of the others will break like ice sickles cut loose from their base. Paul calls the covetousness man an idolater in Eph. 5:5, and in Col. 3:5 he writes, "Evil desire and greed, which amounts to idolatry." Naboth's garden was coveted by Ahab. He so desired it that he murdered to get it. Coveting will lead to stealing, lying, or murder, for there is no other way to get what doesn't belong to you except by one sin or another. There is no non-sinful way to satisfy a desire for someone else's wife or property. If sin is conquered at the point of coveting, it prevents all of the other sins. That is why this last is not least, for it is at this stage that one can gain the victory over all the temptations of Satan. Let the devil get his foot in at this point, and he will soon have you under his foot. We keep our foot on his neck when we are fully aware that our desires are the main battle field.**

**The Hebrew word for covet does not just mean to admire or to wish to have. It means, says Andrew Greely, "To lay plans to take." It is not wrong to admire a neighbor's wife or possessions, or even wish you had equally desirable things, but it is forbidden to lay plans to possess what belongs to others. Once this sin of coveting gets a hold on a culture, it is doomed. Israel came to this point, and had to suffer the wrath of God. In Jer. 6:13 the Lord says, "For from the least to the greatest of them, everyone is greedy for unjust gain, and from prophet to priest, everyone deals falsely." Covetousness became their god, and God rejected them in judgment. Billy Graham said, "The great sin of America is greed and avarice." These are synonyms for**

**covetousness. If this be so, we stand at a place of high risk.**

**Temptation and desire are two different things. I may be tempted to take something not my own, but not want to do it. I chose not to yield to temptation. Temptation is the step that precedes coveting. Temptation is no sin at all, but if I yield to it and begin to covet, then I am in the realm of sin, but still in territory where victory can be gained without loss. I have let Satan get his foot into the door, but have not yet opened the door. Temptation is the knock at the door, and coveting is letting him get his foot in. When you invite him all the way in, that is when you fall into sin. So you can see how important it is to begin the battle before you get to the stage of coveting.**

**This commandment reaches where the long arm of the law can never reach. Man can never make laws concerning his internal nature. He is limited to suppressing and punishing external conduct. God alone can forbid coveting, for God alone can see the heart, and He alone can change it. This last commandment is really the bridge that spans the gap between the Old Testament emphasis on external conduct, and the New Testament emphasis on internal motives. The more we consider the implications of this last commandment, the more we will recognize that it is last but not least.**

**Pliny the Elder, centuries ago, said, "From the end spring new beginnings." So it is with the end of the commandments. Their principles thrust us into a whole new**



**world of beginnings, and endless adventures in the war against sin, and the crusade for Christ likeness. One of the adventures is to explore the reality of the positive side of this vice which can also be a virtue.**

**I. THE VIRTUE OF COVETING. This is actually essential to a full Christian life. Not recognizing this could lead to the Buddhist view that all desire is evil, and the good life, therefore, is to eliminate desire. The Christian view is that desires are of God, and when they are fulfilled in accordance with His will, they comprise the basic joys of life. Paul in I Cor. 12:31 urges believers to covet earnestly the best gifts. Jesus urged us to hunger and thirst after righteousness. We are to have strong desires for all the good gifts of God. We say sometimes, "I covet your prayers." We mean by this, we earnestly desire the value of your intercession.**

**We are to covet our time and use it wisely for eternal values, and not waste it. Joseph Addison wrote, "Nothing lies on our hands with such uneasiness as time. Wretched and thoughtless creatures! In the only place where covetousness were a virtue we turn prodigals." He was right, but he overstates his case, for there are other areas where coveting is a virtue. In fact, it is right to covet everything that can be legitimately obtained and liberally used for the good of man and the glory of God.**

**It is the coveting instinct that makes man rise above the animal in his progress. Henry George in Progress And Poverty writes of man, "...he is the only animal whose**

desires increase as they are fed; the only animal that is never satisfied. The wants of every other living thing are uniformed and fixed. The ox of today aspires to no more than did the ox when man first yoked him. The sea gull of the English Channel, who poises himself above the swift steamer, wants no better food or lodging than the gulls than circle around as the keels of Caesar's galleys first grated on a British beach. Of all that nature offers them, be it ever so abundant, all living things save man can take, and care for, only enough to supply wants which are definite and fixed." Man is made to climb higher and higher, and he could not and would not do so without the desire to acquire the more that God would have him reach for. All the vast resources of God's creation would go unexplored, and we would live on one dead level materially and spiritually without desire, or the virtue of coveting. It is a sin not to covet the higher things that God has for us. But we need to look further at the negative side.

**II. THE VICE OF COVETING.** The evil is not in the desire, but in the way the desire is satisfied, or in the desire being focused on an object one can never justly possess. If I see a picture on your wall, and like it, and desire one for my wall, and go and purchase one, that is not a sin. But if I desire to possess your picture, then I am guilty of the sin that is forbidden. This desire leads to theft, or even other sins such as lying or envy. When the desire to possess is also the desire to dispossess another, it is the vice this commandment forbids. Even if you don't act on a forbidden desire, it is an inner sin, and to be aware of this, and to fight the battle on

**this level, would enable us to avoid all of the sins that violate the law of loving our neighbor as ourselves.**

**David could have avoided all of the sins of adultery, lying, murder, and all the heart aches these brought, if he had obeyed this commandment, and nipped sin in the bud when it was just inner desire. Edward VIII of Great Britain abdicated his throne for a woman he coveted. Archbishop Temple said, "The occasion for Edward's choice ought never to have arisen. It has happened to many a man before now to find himself falling in love with another man's wife. That is the moment of critical decision, and the right decision is that they should cease to meet before passion is so developed as to create an agonizing conflict between love and duty."**

**As soon as you desire anything that is not able to become yours by legitimate labor or purchase, recognize you are on dangerous ground, and move. This vice of coveting is really only a good thing gone after the wrong object. Or it can also be a good thing gone to an extreme. For example, it is good to desire to eat; it is a sign of health, but it is a sin to be a glutton. Here is a good gift of God which by excess has crossed the line dividing virtue and vice. This is true in many ways. It is good to rest, but a sin to be lazy. It is good to be calm, but a sin to be indifferent. It is good to be courageous, but a sin to be careless. So also, it is good to desire many things, but a sin when those things belong to others.**

**We cannot begin to cover all of the evil this world suffers**

because of covetousness. Most all wars can be attributed to this sin. James says this is the cause of war, and some, like the Fredrick the Great, were even honest enough to admit it. When he was going to declare war he asked his secretary to write the proclamation. The secretary began, "Whereas in the providence of God...." "Stop that lying," Fredrick thundered. "Simply say Fredrick wants more land." Seldom is it admitted like this, but this is the origin of war. If men are convinced that this life is all there is, and that materialism is all they can hope for, they have nothing to lose by fighting a war to get all they can. Materialism is a philosophy and covetousness is the driving motive to fulfill that philosophy of getting all you can regardless of who it hurts. This sin is the greatest vice, for it leads to all other sins. Finally lets consider-

**III. VICTORY OVER COVETOUSNESS.** Law can never gain the victory. The rich young ruler obeyed all the commandments, but he could not escape the clutches of covetousness, and so he was still a slave bound by the chains of sin. A man can go far under the law, but he can never get passed this last hurdle. It is a catchall that condemns all men as hopeless sinners. All law can do is punish sin, it cannot prevent sin. The law can do as the ancients did with a man whose covetousness led to strife and war. They poured molten gold down his throat. This got rid of the patient, but it did not cure the disease. If the fountain is polluted, it is the fountain that must be cleaned, and, therefore, this last commandment thrusts us right into the New Testament plan of God.

**Sin originates in the heart where the law cannot touch. Therefore, man needs a new heart. Oehler, the theologian wrote, "The fulfillment of the law is only complete when the heart is sanctified." We know that only the blood of Christ can cleanse the heart and dissolve the clot of covetousness that threatens to destroy us all. The love of Christ does not suppress desire, but lifts our desires to a higher level so that we can set our affections on things above. We may at times still lust for the lowly, but we counteract that by coveting God's best-the fruit and gifts of the Spirit. This last commandment shows us where the real sin problem lies, and compels us to submit to the only known cure which is faith in Christ. Thus, it leads the famished soul from the husks of the law to the feast and abundance of the Gospel. As number ten, it comes at the end, but though it is last, it is not least.**