

## The Ten Commandments (1)

### "A Great Salvation"

Over the next twelve studies we are going to discover together what the true and living God says in His perfect law. This law is known as "The Ten Commandments" and it is found in the Old Testament of the Bible. These laws are very special because all the other commands and messages of God were given through His prophets, but this part of Scripture is spoken and written by God Himself. You will find these commandments recorded in the Book of the Exodus and chapter 20, and they begin like this, in verses 1 and 2: "And God spoke all these words: I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery."

The living God is the God of all wisdom and all authority and He is the creator of all life and therefore He has the right to give us His laws. Notice that these verses start with the phrase, "God spoke ALL these words." We are to be certain that all that is to follow, that is the Ten Commandments, are the very words of God Himself. All that He was about to communicate to His servant Moses was to be God's moral law for all mankind. Here were rules to instruct us that would be unalterable and they are still in force today. These laws, written by the finger of God, are a demonstration of His love for us for they were given to mankind as clear instructions and for our good.

We read in Nehemiah chapter 9 verse 13 concerning this:

"You came down on Mount Sinai; you spoke to them from heaven. You gave them regulations and laws that are just and right, and decrees and commands that are good."

What would humanity be without rules and laws and the means to enforce them? It would be even more wild and wicked than it already is! Human laws are fallible and they often fail us, but God's laws are infallible and they never fail because they are based on love: love for God and love for our fellow-man.

An early Christian writer called Thomas Watson has said that the Ten Commandments are "a chain of pearls to adorn us; they are our treasury to enrich us; they are more precious than lands of spices and rocks of diamonds." The Psalmist, King David of Israel, said in Scripture: "The law from your mouth is more precious to me than thousands of pieces of silver and gold."

In Exodus 20 verse 2, God tells us three things about Himself. He tells us that He is the God who keeps His promises to His people - He is the Covenant-keeping God. He is the Redeemer and He is the Liberator.

Our verse starts with the declaration: "I am the Lord your God." He uses the name 'Jehovah', the name that signifies His self-sufficiency, and His eternity, and the fact that He never changes. He says to His people, "I am your God". Here is something personal, not just for the people as a whole, but for each individual. The eternal God desires a personal relationship with us as individuals. If you are a Christian, He is your God, not only because He is your Creator, but because He has chosen you, redeemed you and set you free from your sins through the Lord Jesus Christ.

Those who know Christ as their Saviour speak of the Living God as "Our Rock"; Our "Strong Tower" and "Our Salvation." The Christian speaks of God as "Our Father", the One who is tender and caring, the "Father of mercies", who is from everlasting to everlasting. It is a wonderful privilege to belong to the Lord God. So, there is a very special relationship between Christians and Jehovah, the Lord. This relationship is based on God's Covenant sealed by the precious blood of the Lord Jesus when He gave His life on the cross for the sins of mankind. Christians are in covenant union with the Living God, and His covenants can never be broken by Him.

We discover next that the Lord Jehovah is "The Redeemer." He goes on to say, "I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery." Egypt was the

place of false religion, where the Living God was not known or worshipped. It corresponds to the place of slavery to sin and all that that implies.

The Children of Israel were brought out of Egypt by a series of miracles and their deliverance was made notable by its greatness. After Joseph died, they settled down in the land and it became attractive to them for a time until circumstances changed. They should never have remained in Egypt, for Canaan was their promised inheritance. In Egypt there wasn't just cruel oppression, but the evils of idolatry as well.

Ten times in the Old Testament of the Bible, the Lord reminds the people, "I brought you out of Egypt." Before people are brought to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, they live, as it were, in a "spiritual Egypt." Before Israel was brought out of the land of slavery by God's mighty hand, they were also delivered from the angel of death by the killing of the Passover lamb. The shed blood of those lambs protected them from the awful and righteous judgement of God upon Egypt. The Christian, too, has been delivered from judgement and from slavery to sin by the sacrifice of God's own Son on the cross of Calvary, and by His glorious resurrection. Christian friend, never forget what it is you have been delivered from by Jehovah, your Redeemer.

In this verse God tells us a third thing about Himself: He tells us that He is "The Liberator." He says, "I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the land of slavery." He is the one who set them free from the place of idolatry and enslavement. The Christian has been delivered from the worship of false gods and from the bondage of sin. Every deliverance is different as we see in the experiences recorded for us in Scripture: Israel were not delivered immediately from Egypt, but when deliverance came it was swift; Joseph was freed from prison in a day; Saul of Tarsus was brought to his knees in a moment on the Damascus road.

Friend, if you are still bound by your sins, God wants to deliver you, to be your liberator, to set you free from sin's penalty and power, and He can do it now! It was Augustine who once said, "I was held before my conversion, not with an iron chain but with the obstinacy of my own will." Sin is the enslaver of mankind and it is called a law because of its binding power.

No one can be justified in the sight of God by keeping His law because we have already fallen short of its standard. Of ourselves we cannot keep God's law for we are all sinful by nature. The Scriptures tell us that God's law is "a schoolmaster" to drive us to the Lord Jesus Christ. It drives us to Christ when we realise that we have broken it and we cannot keep it. The only way we can be justified by God is through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ Who died on the cross to bear away the sin of the world - your sins and mine.

The Lord Jesus Christ fulfilled the promises of the covenant-keeping God. He came to redeem lost sinners and to liberate the slaves of sin and Satan. Only He fulfilled all of God's law and by His death on the cross He paid the redemption price. By His resurrection from the dead He is able to liberate captives and set them free from the law of sin and death, and to deliver them from eternal judgement.

So, we have discovered that the Living God is the Covenant-keeping God, the Redeeming God and the Liberating God. If you are a Christian, rejoice today in all that this mighty and loving God has done for you. If you are not a Christian turn to Christ who will set you free from your sin and make you a child of the Living God.

Until next time, when we shall discover the first of God's commandments, which is: "You shall have no other gods before me" - goodbye and the Lord be with you.

## The Ten Commandments (2)

### Commandment No. 1

This time we are going to look at the first of these Ten Commandments, which are found in the book of Exodus and chapter 20 verses 1 to 17. This is the first, in verse 3: "You shall have no other gods before me." What God is saying here is this: "I alone am God and you shall have no-one else." The Living God is to be worshipped and obeyed exclusively.

When the Children of Israel came eventually to the Promised Land, after their liberation from Egypt, they were surrounded by people who worshipped and served idols and practised all kinds of immorality. False gods, false religion and false worship abounded. Because of this Israel was always in danger of being lured away and forsaking the Lord their God. This commandment was addressed not just to their priests or to those who were a religious elite, but it was for all of the people. It was a law for ordinary people both then and now.

It is a direct and clear command: "You shall have no other gods before me." This phrase "before me" means literally, "to my face." It is a very unusual phrase that was also used in connection with taking a second wife while the first was still alive. It means to break an exclusive relationship. Verse 5 of Exodus 20 tells us that, "I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God." He will not share His worship with any other. He has already explained this in the opening verse by describing Himself as, "The Lord your God" - Jehovah God, the eternal Creator.

This, then, is the first commandment and it is the foundation stone of true faith. There is only one true religion and it is based on the one Living and True God. We discover this in the letter to the Hebrews chapter 6 and verse 6:

"And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to Him must believe that He exists and that He rewards those who earnestly seek Him."

The first step in becoming a true believer is to give the Living God His rightful place as the one and only Lord. This first commandment, then, is the most important of all and it was highlighted by the Lord Jesus Christ Himself as, "The first and great commandment of the law." It is a commandment that is addressed personally to each one of us - "YOU shall have no other gods." The God of heaven, He alone is God; therefore He must be OUR God.

Now, in one sense we all have the Living God as our God by the natural life that we have and through creation, but not all have Him as their God by their own choice. This first commandment is about making that choice for ourselves. God is revealed to us in the world of nature. The whole of creation declares to an open mind that there is a Creator. But even this is a limited revelation, declaring only God's handiwork and his awesome power. There is a special revelation of God in His written Word, the Bible. The Bible is a unique book because its writing was guided by God Himself so that we might see Him at work in our world and know the truth concerning Himself. Peter tells us in his first letter, chapter 1 and verses 20 and 21:

"And above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation. For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit."

Paul also, in writing to Timothy says: "All Scripture is God-breathed ..."

The Lord Jesus said of the Scriptures: "Your word is true" and He said that the Scriptures cannot be broken, for God cannot lie. In the Bible, then, we have a true and accurate and infallible revelation of the mind of God. In its pages we see revealed the God of creation who loves those whom He created in His own image and who throughout the

ages has spoken in various ways through His servants and prophets, but who in these last days has spoken to us through His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

If you are to know this Living God for yourself there are four things that you need to do:

First: you must CHOOSE Him. The challenge of Joshua to the Children of Israel, when they had fallen away to serve false gods, was this: "Choose you□this day□whom you will serve." Don't put off choosing God for tomorrow is not promised. The way to God is only through His Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, Who said: "I am the way, the truth and the life, no-one comes to the Father except through Me." If you are drawn to trust in Christ, it is God's Holy Spirit at work in you. Do not resist Him. To choose God in Christ is to choose life, but to reject Him is to choose death and eternal judgement.

The second thing we must do is to REVERENCE the Living God. The inspired writers of the Bible all had a deep reverence for God. One said, "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom." God is Holy and is to be held in awe. We must come before Him trembling and with a sense of our own unworthiness. His Name is not to be used carelessly as we shall see in another of these commandments. But we remember also that this God is a loving God who shows love to those who love him and keep His commandments.

The third thing we need to do, if we are to really know the Living God, is to TRUST Him. King David of Israel once said: "The Lord is my rock, my fortress and my deliverer; the God of my strength in Him will I trust." And in Psalm 91 he declares: "He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the Lord, 'He is my refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust.'"

So we must choose God, we must reverence God and we must trust Him, and fourthly we must YIELD to Him. We are like the clay and He is the potter to mould and change us. David also said in Psalm 40: "I desire to do your will, O my God, your law is within my heart." We are to be pliable in the hands of God, not resistant to His will and purpose for us.

So why should we choose and reverence and trust and yield to God? Because it is necessary and because if the Living and True God is not your God, you are his enemy and you are not living in obedience to His law. We should do so because it is right to do so. We read in Psalm 100 verse 3:

"Know that the Lord is God. It is He who made us, and we are His; we are His people, the sheep of His pasture."

It is necessary, it is right and lastly it is to our advantage to acknowledge that there is only one God who is to be chosen, revered, trusted and yielded to. We see this in verse 6 of our passage in Exodus 20 where we read that "God shows mercy to thousands who love Him and keep His commandments." When we love God and obey Him then we are living in harmony with our Creator, but this is only possible through His saving grace. Then we can say with the Psalmist, "Happy is that people whose God is the Lord".

In the famous English Universities of Oxford and Cambridge it is the chapel that occupies the central place. All the faculties and departments are built around these centres. This should be a picture of our lives for God should be the very centre of our living. Why should we have no other gods? Because there is no other God apart from the Living God, the eternal creator of all. There are many false gods but the Bible teaches us in the Old Testament book of Deuteronomy chapter 4 verse 39:

"Acknowledge and take to heart this day that the Lord (Jehovah) is God in heaven above and on the earth below. There is no other. Keep his decrees and His commands..."

What or who is that absorbs most of your thoughts, your time and your affections? Is it the eternal, living God as revealed in the Lord Jesus Christ or is it other things or other people? Is the Living God your God and truly Lord of your life today or have you replaced Him with something else? Jesus called this first commandment, "The great

commandment of the law." It is a command to love the Lord your God with every part of your being.

So, we have discovered from the Scriptures that there is only one God whom we should worship and He alone is worthy of that worship because He is our maker and in the Lord Jesus Christ our Saviour from sin and its eternal consequence. May you choose Him today, reverence Him, trust Him and yield your life to Him and know His blessing and His salvation.

## The Ten Commandments (3)

### Commandment No. 2

We are continuing to discover together the Ten Commandments of God found in Exodus chapter 20 in the Old Testament of the Bible. These commandments were given to the people of Israel as a standard by which they were to order their lives. They were given to show that God is holy and that He alone is to be worshipped. And they were given to show how we should live with one another in this world.

We come today to the second commandment, which is found in verses 4 to 6. This is what the living God says:

"You shall not make for yourself an idol in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me, but showing love to thousands who love me and keep my commandments."

Whatever the hand of sin touches it spoils, even a precious thing such as worship. This time on "Discovery" I'm going to ask four questions about this second commandment of God which forbids the worship of idols. The first question is this: "What is idolatry?" We can answer this simply in one sentence: "It is giving our worship to anything or anyone else, instead of to the living and true God."

When the Lord God gave this commandment to Moses to pass on to the Children of Israel, the nations around them made idols of wood often covered with a precious metal, and the people worshipped these and prayed to them. Abraham's ancestors were idolaters and he was called by God to leave all that behind when he left Ur of the Chaldees. Rebecca's brother, Laban, had household gods, and even Jacob's wife, Rachel, was a secret worshipper of idols. In the days of Israel's judges there were many idols being produced and made objects of worship. These idols were tangible objects designed to be worshipped and revered. They were put in the place of the only One who should be worshipped.

Writing to the Romans many centuries later, the apostle Paul said this concerning mankind in chapter 1 verses 20 to 23:

"For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities - His eternal power and divine nature - have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse. For although they knew God, they neither glorified Him as God nor gave thanks to Him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened. Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like mortal men and birds and animals and reptiles."

So what is idolatry? It is worshipping anything other than the Living and True God. This is not just images of wood or stone, or living things, it is anything to which we devote ourselves to the exclusion of God, anything that is more important to us than God.

The second question we might ask is this: "What forms does idolatry take?" It can take many forms and can sometimes entangle us without our realising it. The veneration of religious objects and images can become a substitute for true worship of the Lord God. People idolise sports teams and pop singers and glorify all that they do, but never think to give God the glory due to Him as Lord of all. When we speak of idolatry we are thinking of the worship of what is false rather than true, of giving undue love and affection to someone, more than is given to God. Behind the worship of idols there is superstition which is belief based on fear or on ignorance and that is contrary to the truth as revealed in the Bible and in the person of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Christians are to avoid all appearance of evil, and are not to be associated with any of the superstitions of the world around. The life of the Christian is in God's hands and so it is wrong, for example, to consult horoscopes or fortune tellers with their Tarot cards and their crystal gazing.

If idolatry is a superstitious substitute for God, then what about mysticism? This is the teaching that knowledge of spiritual truths can be acquired by intuition and meditation. God has given us the faculty of the mind, and the Bible teaches us that, "Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God." God's Word alone is His revelation to us. Mysticism seeks direct revelation from God apart from His Holy Word, and that is wrong. Divine revelations apart from the Bible are a delusion. We should never switch off our minds at any time, seeking something new or exciting, that path is dangerous and leaves us open to the activities of Satan.

So, we've discovered "What idolatry is" and "What forms idolatry takes", now we ask, "Why is it wrong?" It is wrong because the Living God forbids it. In our Bible passage, Exodus chapter 20, verse 5, we read: "I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God." The true God, the Creator of all, is the only God and this excludes all others. He alone commands and demands our worship. This is why He says, "You shall have no other gods before me. You shall not bow down to them or serve them." To engage in the worship of other gods so called is to hate and reject Him.

He goes on to say in verse 5, "I am a jealous God visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and fourth generation of those who hate Me." This is a Semitic phrase which denotes continuity. It applies to those who hate God, to those who substitute other objects of worship for Him. It applies to those who reject the laws of the Living God, and to those who reject the great salvation God offers through His dear Son, our Lord Jesus Christ.

When one generation rejects God's law it effects future generations because sin effects society. The actions of parents and peers influence children, and evil acts have their consequences across generations. You see this around the world today in many forms, such as child abuse, exploitation, abortion, pornography and immorality of every kind. Here is the clear teaching of God's Word that disregard of His Law brings certain punishment. Sin has its consequences in society and upon those who reject God, both now and in eternity.

So, we've looked briefly at these three questions: "What is idolatry?", "What forms does it take?", And "Why is it wrong?" The fourth question is: "What is the alternative?" The answer is found in verse 6 of Exodus chapter 20 where God says that He shows mercy "To thousands who love me and keep my commandments." To trust in anyone or anything other than the Living God is sinful, futile, foolish and hopeless. At the beginning of these commandments God reminded the people of Israel that it was He Who had "brought them out of Egypt and out of the land of slavery." It was not the false gods of Egypt, made of wood and stone, that had delivered them. They owed their liberty to God's mercy and God's love for them, and now He calls for their undivided love in return. He was calling them to love Him and to obey Him because He had shown them great mercy and He was their True and Living God. They would have been nothing but for this, still in slavery and captives in an alien land.

What is the alternative to trusting in gods that are no gods? What is the alternative to giving our lives over to materialism and the passing pleasures of a sinful world, to the exclusion of God? The alternative is to recognise that this eternal and living Lord is real and that He loves you and has given His Son, Jesus Christ, as a sacrifice for your sins. He has done this to deliver you from this present evil age and from eternal punishment. The alternative to idolatry of whatever kind is to worship the One Who deserves your worship and the dedication of your life to Him.

Christians are those who love the Lord their God and keep His commandments. The evidence of love to God is obedience to His Word. May the Lord lead you into a life of full obedience and may you worship only Him Who is Lord of all.

## The Ten Commandments (4)

### Commandment No. 3

We are going to discover something more about the Ten Commandments given by God to his servant Moses, and which have a lot to teach us today. This time we are going to look at the third commandment and this is found in the Old Testament of the Bible in the book of Exodus chapter 20 and verse 7. Here is what it says:

"You shall not misuse the name of the Lord your God, for the Lord will not hold anyone guiltless who misuses His name."

This commandment deals with a sin that is committed with the tongue. The Bible has much to say about our tongues and the way we can use them for good or for evil. Jeremiah the prophet says of the human heart, "The heart is deceitful and desperately wicked". It is from the thoughts and intents of our hearts that we give voice to our feelings and intentions and what is inside us. The Lord Jesus said: "Out of the overflow of the heart the mouth speaks... I tell you that men will have to give account on the day of judgement for every careless word they have spoken." In the New Testament, James describes the tongue as "a fire, a world of evil among the parts of the body. It corrupts the whole person, sets the whole course of life on fire, and is itself set on fire by hell." That's James chapter 3 verse 6.

The same tongue can praise God and curse men, and this third commandment concerns the misuse of the human tongue in relation to the name of the Lord God of heaven and earth. There are three things that we discover as we read this solemn command of the Lord: there is an ATTITUDE, a PROHIBITION and a WARNING.

Let's look first of all at the Attitude.

Every true Christian should be concerned to see the name of God exalted and honoured. The Psalmist, David, said "Ascribe to the Lord the glory due to His name. Worship the Lord in the splendour of His holiness." He also said, "Glorify the Lord with me, let us exalt His name together." But what is meant by "God's name"? If you refer to someone by their name, you are not referring to some arrangement of the letters of the alphabet, or parts of that person such as an arm or a leg, you're referring to the whole person. When we use God's name we are referring to His whole person. In other words, the name stands for the person. So, the name of God speaks of the whole person of God, the totality of His being and attributes. When you use His name you are speaking of all that God is. The name of God includes His character. He is the one who is infinite and eternal. He is unchanging in His wisdom and power and holiness, and in His justice and love and goodness and truth. When you use the name God, or Lord or Jehovah, or the name of God's Son, Jesus Christ, it should be with reverence and worship and honour.

How do we honour the name of God? We honour it when we are not ashamed to be called by His name. Christians are God's children through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. As God's children we will not want His name to be dishonoured. We will want to remain true to His name by the way we live because what we do and what we say will bring either honour or dishonour on the name of our God and Saviour. What, then, is your attitude towards God's name? Does it fill you with awe and reverence and thanksgiving because of who He is?

There are many wonderful names given in the Bible to describe Jehovah, the eternal God, the one who keeps and protects and provides for His people. God's Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, is described in the prophecy of Isaiah as, "Wonderful, counsellor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the prince of peace." The very name "Jesus" reminds us that He is the Saviour from sins. So the name of our God is to be respected and honoured by all - this should be our ATTITUDE.

Secondly this commandment speaks of a PROHIBITION: "You shall not misuse the name of the Lord your God." There is a right way and a wrong way to use the Lord's name. What is meant by misusing God's name, or "taking it in vain" as the King James Version has it? We misuse the name of God when we use it lightly or irreverently or thoughtlessly. Would we go into the presence of a president or other important person and use their name in a flippant or casual way - of course not! We would not use the name of a friend in such a way as to dishonour them. So why treat the name of the Living God any differently?

We misuse God's name when in one breath we claim to belong to Him and with another we say evil things. This is what James was saying when he said, "We use our tongues to both praise God and to curse men." How careful we need to be when we are speaking of the Lord that we do so in a thoughtful and reverent way. It is a COMMANDMENT that we do not use the name of God in any way that would detract from who He is. The Psalmist says, "Holy and awesome is His name", and we must never forget this.

Sadly, too, the name of God is misused when it is used as a curse or in swearing. The Puritan, Thomas Watson, said, "Blasphemy and foul language is the dialect of hell." In many parts of the world it has become commonplace to hear the name of our Lord Jesus used in swearing. The name of God springs to peoples lips in exclamation when they are surprised or frightened or angry. They have no thought for God at all, but the use of His name seems to lend force to their emotion. This is wrong and is an evil and is the misuse of God's name forbidden in this commandment. Listening friend, guard your tongue against such evil, and graciously rebuke those who so dishonour the name of our great God and our Saviour.

So, we have discovered in this third commandment an "Attitude" and a "Prohibition". We come now to the "WARNING." It is a very solemn warning, found in verse 7 of Exodus chapter 20:

"The Lord will not hold anyone guiltless who misuses His name."

Those who blaspheme God's name will be pronounced guilty before him on the day of judgement. This is God's verdict on all those who dishonour His name and use it carelessly. The sin of blasphemy is sometimes regarded as less significant than other sins in these days, yet no sin is small in God's sight and this commandment is as important as all those which follow it. The tongue which habitually misuses God's name indicates a heart that is far from Him. At the beginning of this talk I mentioned that the Lord Jesus said, "Out of the overflow of the heart, the mouth speaks." If our hearts do not regard the holiness and majesty of God, then our lips will not praise Him and we will find ourselves using God's name in wrong ways.

What is your attitude towards God? will you heed the prohibition and take seriously the warning? Do you love the Lord? Do you want to honour His name? Have you called on the name of the Lord for His salvation? If you do it will transform your life and never again will you want to use His name in vain and so dishonour the one who loves you and gave His Son to die for your sins on the cross.

## The Ten Commandments (5)

### Commandment No. 4

The commandments given by God to Moses on Mount Sinai were for the instruction and guidance of God's people, and were a binding law by which they were to order their lives. If they observed them, then they would be blessed as a people because they set out the rules for a right relationship between man and God and between man and man. These commandments also had another purpose, as we discover in the New Testament. This was to demonstrate to the people, and to us today, that because of our sinful natures we are not capable in ourselves of keeping these laws. This should drive us to seek the mercy of God and the salvation that He has provided in His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

This time we are looking at the fourth commandment which is found in Exodus chapter 20 and verses 8 to 11. This is what it says:

"Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy. Six days you shall labour and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you nor your son or daughter, nor your manservant or your maidservant, nor the animals, nor the alien within your gates. For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but He rested on the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy."

Of all the commandments this is the longest, and it occupies an important position because it ends the section that deals with man's duty to God. The rest of the commandments deal with our duty towards our fellow human beings.

To keep the first three commandments properly demands that we keep this fourth commandment. We are commanded in them to have no gods before the Living and True God; to make no idols and to worship only God; and we are commanded not to misuse God's name in any way. And here in this fourth commandment we are to keep one day set apart for Him. It is also true that without keeping the first four commandments, we cannot properly keep the rest.

First then, we discover that this is a key command of God. It is based on the principle that God Himself rested on the seventh day after the work of creation was complete. This principle of keeping a Sabbath day cannot be relegated to a bygone age. As the rest of the commandments are for all time, so too this one, and it should be observed - especially by Christian believers.

Of course, every day belongs to the Lord, but the Sabbath is His by special right, and we are called on to remember it. We tend to forget very easily or to allow other things to crowd out this day, which rightly belongs to God. We are to remember it because God has commanded it. He does not ask for six days, but just one out of each seven. Do we begrudge God His day? "The seventh day", says this commandment, "is a Sabbath to the Lord your God." If the Lord God set aside a day for rest, then so should His people. There are many benefits that come from setting aside this day for the worship and service of God, and for rest from the toils of the week. It was intended to be a time of both spiritual and physical refreshment. So this is the basis of the day.

Next we discover the "blessedness of the day." The Sabbath is a blessed day for those who keep it. We are occupied all week with business, and with household duties, and there are pressures of many kinds. But the Sabbath is special because that is when Christian believers can meet together to hear the Lord's Word, to worship and to pray. On this day we can be built-up in our faith and be refreshed for the week ahead. Sadly, in many parts of the world which have a Christian tradition the principle of a Sabbath day has been abandoned. Every day of the week is the same with commerce and industry not pausing at all. People find themselves forced to work on God's day, and there is

nothing special about the day in the eyes of many. If you are still able to observe the Sabbath day then value it and use it as God intended you to. You will be blessed by it.

The question has arisen in some minds as to which day Christians should keep as the Sabbath. Should we keep the first day of the week or the seventh day of the week? The Sabbath, or Sabbat means "Rest," or "Day of Rest." Orthodox Jews, following this original commandment, still observe the seventh day of the week as their Sabbath. From 6 p.m. Friday to 6 p.m. Saturday is regarded as the Sabbath day. The Christian Sabbath or "Lord's Day" obeys the principle set out in this fourth commandment that there must be a day of rest, set apart for the Lord our God. The Lord Jesus Christ is described as "The Lord of the Sabbath", it is His day, and it was He who said that "The Sabbath is made for man, and not man for the Sabbath." In other words this command is given for man's blessing and benefit, not merely as a regulation to be observed.

In Psalm 118 verses 22 to 24 we have a reference to Christ that is quoted six times in the New Testament. In these verses we read these words:

"The stone the builder rejected has become the capstone; the Lord has done this and it is marvellous in our eyes. This is the day the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it."

So, there is a day of rejoicing and gladness associated with the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. This Psalm is quoted by Peter as he addresses the rulers and elders of the Jews in Acts chapter 4 verses 10 to 12, and notice the context of what he is saying:

"Then know this, you and everyone else in Israel: It is by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified but whom God raised from the dead, that this man stands before you completely healed. He is 'The stone you builders rejected, which has become the capstone,' Salvation is found in no-one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved."

Now clearly the "rejected stone" is a reference to the crucifixion of the Lord Jesus Christ. But the rejected stone became the headstone, or capstone, of the corner when Jesus was raised from the dead. So which day of rejoicing and gladness can we say is being referred to in Psalm 24 - the "day that the Lord has made"? Looking at it carefully, in its context, and as proclaimed by the apostle Peter, we see that it refers to the resurrection day of the Lord Jesus Christ. This was on the first day of the week. The Jewish Sabbath in the week of Christ's crucifixion was not a day of joy for Jesus was dead and in a tomb. The disciples were distressed and frightened and scattered. They were not glad at all but were very sad. But the next day, the first day of the week, their sadness turned to very great joy and gladness because Jesus had risen from the dead.

For New Testament believers, the first day of the week occupied an important place. They met on this day and it was on this day that God poured out His Spirit at Pentecost. There has always been a Sabbath day, but the day that we would call the first Easter Saturday was the last old covenant Sabbath. A Sabbath based on God's resting on completion of creation. The very next day a new Sabbath began based on the resurrection of the Lord Jesus when God's work of salvation was made complete in the finished work of His dear Son.

The evidence from the New Testament and from secular history is that the first Christians met together on the FIRST day of the week which they called "The Lord's Day." So what is our responsibility? The Christian Sabbath is given to us by God to be remembered by all His people. We should prepare spiritually for it and set aside all unnecessary work. It is a day when we should seek the good of others by helping those who need help. It is a day when we can set aside all other legitimate activities and give our time to the Lord, to worship Him and to witness for our Saviour.

So, the principle of this fourth commandment is clear: God desires of His people that they set aside one day a week for Him. It may be that where you are it is not possible to

observe the first day of the week. If this is so then give the Lord what you can, whenever you can, and you will be blessed as you do.

## The Ten Commandments (6)

### Commandment No. 5

We come now to discover what we can learn from the fifth of the Ten Commandments that God gave to Moses and to the people of Israel. We have discovered already in the previous talks that, although they were given long ago, these laws are still valid today because they are the commands of the Living God. They were given for the clear direction of the people concerning their relationship with God and with their fellow men. If it were possible for individuals and societies to live always by these commandments, then our world would be a much better place.

God's perfect law is a guide-line by which we can judge how closely we measure up to all that God requires of us. But we soon find, don't we, that we cannot keep these commandments in their entirety because of the sinful nature within us. This is why the Bible teaches us that "We have all sinned and come short of the glory of God." The Bible also tells us that one of the purposes of the law was to drive us to seek the salvation and forgiveness that God has provided through His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. So this law of God is very important and we do well to take note of what it says and of the lessons we can learn from it.

The fifth commandment is found in the Old Testament, in Exodus chapter 20 and verse 12. This is what it says:

"Honour your father and your mother, so that you may live long in the land the Lord your God is giving you."

We have noted in a previous talk that the first four commandments have to do with our relationship to God. This one is the first concerned with our relationships with our fellow men. So here is a word for everyone - "Honour your parents." This commandment refers to our responsibility towards those who are our closest family members, the ones through whom we came into the world.

We might pause here and remind ourselves that parenthood is a great responsibility. It is one of the marks of a failing society when parenthood is undertaken lightly, with little sense of its importance, and where children are mistreated or neglected. Parents are to act in such a way as to deserve the respect of their children by the way they guide and help and set them a good example. They are to teach and train their children and above all to show their love for them.

The apostle John, writing in another context, says:

"I have no greater joy than to hear that my children are walking in the truth."

Of course, he was writing about his "children in the faith", those who had become believers through his witness and ministry, and there can be no greater joy for Christian parents than to see their children also "walking in the truth." Sadly, many young people today are disobedient to their parents and very rebellious. They do not regard this commandment of the Lord that they should honour their father and mother, and one mark of this is obedience to them. The Bible teaches us that in the last days "perilous times" or "times of great stress" will come upon the world, and one of the features of those days would be rebellious children. This would be much more than naughtiness and childish willfulness, but a marked disregard for and rejection of parental authority, and indeed authority of any kind. Surely we are living in such days!

This command, then, is clear and specific and brings with it a promise of God's blessing. It reminds us of the duties of parenthood and the responsibilities of living in right relationship to our parents. This is not just the teaching of the Old Testament for we find the apostle Paul saying the same thing to the Christians at Ephesus in chapter 6 verses 1 to 4 of his letter:

"Children obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. Honour your father and mother - which is the first commandment with a promise - that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth. Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord."

The commandments have a breadth of application - in other words we can discover other principles within them to guide us. Here are some examples from the Scriptures for you to think about:

We can think of those who are regarded as our national and political fathers, whose commitment and efforts, out of genuine concern, have improved our societies. Peter says that the proper order of things is to "Fear God" and then "To honour the king" - that is those in authority in our land. Paul says something similar - "Let everyone be subject to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except from God." We are to pray for those who are national and civic fathers. It is the duty of every Christian to honour those in authority by obedience to the laws, except where there is a direct conflict with God's laws.

And then we can think of aged men and woman, especially when age is

graced with godliness. These are the past mothers and fathers of our society who should be respected and honoured by all. Another sad feature of our age is the callousness with which older members of society are often treated by the younger ones. In a Christian community it is a very great privilege to accompany and encourage older believers who have served the Lord from their early days. Younger people, by listening to their wisdom and by showing courtesy, can help older ones to feel wanted and worthwhile. In this way we will honour them.

I mentioned just now the apostle John writing to his spiritual "children" in the faith. The apostle Paul regarded Timothy as his "son in the faith." So, too, we have spiritual "fathers". Those through whom we were led to Christ, and those who now seek to guide, and teach, and correct, and encourage us along the way. These spiritual fathers - and mothers - are to be honoured and obeyed also. Like natural parents they, too, have responsibilities towards their spiritual children. So, we read in Hebrews chapter 13 verse 17:

"Obey your leaders and submit to their authority. They keep watch over you as men who must give an account. Obey them so that their work will be a joy, not a burden..."

But such respect must be earned, both by natural parents and spiritual parents. Those who have the care of God's people are to show by their lives that they also are obedient to the Lord and His Word. Those who bring dishonour on the Lord's name should not expect honour or respect from others. Spiritual fathers should be such as referred to by the writer to the Hebrews in chapter 13 verse 7:

"Remember your leaders, who spoke the word of God to you. Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith."

So we have discovered that this fifth commandment to honour our parents can teach us much about our attitude towards others around us whom we may regard as "fathers."

Finally, let's come back to the specific command itself, that we honour our natural parents - our father and our mother. This is both a warning and a command. Parents are not perfect people, they are subject to sin and to failure like everyone else, but we are nevertheless commanded to treat them with respect and honour. How do we do this? First, by loving them. It is easy to love parents who themselves are loving and kind, and it may not be so easy to love parents who have failed us in some way. For the Christian the standard of love is displayed on the cross of Calvary where the Lord Jesus gave His life in love for those who despised and rejected Him. We are to love our parents, and indeed all people, with Christ's love. A love that does not look at failures and sins but at the person, and values them as God does.

We honour our parents by praying for them. We honour them by doing all the good we can for them, and by being kind and thoughtful towards them. Then, we honour our parents by obeying them as we have already mentioned. In this we have the Lord Jesus Christ as our example. We read in Luke chapter 2 verse 31 that as a boy He was obedient to Mary and to Joseph as His earthly parents. Here are words of wisdom from the book of Proverbs:

"Listen my son to your father's instruction and do not forsake your mother's teaching."

Finally - this fifth commandment is the first that has a promise attached to it. Paul quotes it in the verses from Ephesians I mentioned just now:

"Honour your father and mother, that it may go well with you, and that you may enjoy long life on the earth."

Here is a general principle - it is that undisciplined children spell ruin for families and for nations and for the church. A well ordered and blessed society is one in which parents are respected and obeyed, and in which parenthood itself is honoured and accepted as a responsibility from God Himself.

## The Ten Commandments (7)

### Commandment No. 6

We continue to discover the moral law of God as found in the Ten Commandments. These commandments are found in the Old Testament of the Bible, in Exodus chapter 20. This time we are going to think about the sixth commandment that says: "You shall not murder." This short but definite commandment teaches us that human life is precious, but we need to be clear right at the start that not all killing is murder.

Very early on in human history men had to learn the seriousness of taking another's life. God said to Noah, in an age that was full of violence, "Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed; for in the image of God has God made man." That's Genesis 9 verse 6. It's an extremely serious thing to take someone's life in an act of murder. The very first family of man included in its number the murderer Cain. He was jealous of his brother Abel and became so angry that he killed him. King David once wrote a letter and it cost a man his life. He told his general, Joab, to put the man Urriah in the forefront of the battle and leave him there so that he would be killed. David's lust for the wife of Urriah led him to this dreadful act. Later, Nathan the prophet of God said to David, "Why did you despise the word of the Lord by doing what is evil in his eyes? YOU struck down Urriah the Hittite with the sword and took his wife to be your own. YOU killed him with the sword of the Ammonites."

David's uncontrolled passion led to the sin of murder. Resentment, anger, greed, jealousy, a cruel streak and lust continue to cause men to kill each other. Never trivialise sin, for a desire for revenge, or a spirit of jealousy, or uncontrolled passion, or a burning anger are not to be seen as insignificant because they are often very close to murder.

In the New Testament, in Galatians chapter 5 verses 19 to 21, Paul lists murder with outbursts of anger, or if you like, displays of temper, and envy and drunkenness as the acts of the human sinful nature, and he says that those who live like this "Will not inherit the kingdom of God." We live in a violent world. The sin of murder is sadly all too common. In the film industry, violence and killing are popular themes. We should not be surprised that a society that is in rebellion against God cares little or nothing for those created in God's image.

As Christians we are to view very seriously all situations where there is the ending of a human life, whatever the reason. The issue of abortion is one that is at the forefront of debate in our day. It is a very serious issue, especially when abortion is so often seen as the easy way out of an unwanted pregnancy, and there is no regard for the life of the unborn child.

We remind ourselves again that all human life is a gift from God and is held precious by Him. We read in Jeremiah chapter 1 verse 5: (God said) "Before I formed you in the womb, I knew you." Isaiah the prophet could say, "The Lord has called me from the womb." And we read in Psalm 139, "For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb." All these Bible verses teach us that even before birth the individual is known to God and at that stage there is a life that is to be respected and guarded. Wrong thinking about this can even lead to a legalised form of murder.

And then there is the issue of attitudes. The Lord Jesus Christ tells us that "Out of the heart proceeds - murders." Words can be very cruel and destructive. Mental cruelty is a terrible thing. We can virtually destroy people by harsh, critical and wounding words. Sadly, it even happens sometimes in churches when people are not welcomed and not shown love, and where thoughtless things are said which cause deep distress.

An intolerant or cruel attitude can lead to bullying, and this is not confined to the school playground. Some husbands are bullies, some wives, some parents. And there are some children who bully vulnerable parents. Some people know how to taunt and how to "wind people up" as we say. In other words, to make them react to what is being said or done.

All these attitudes come from a real disregard for the value of the lives of others. In 1 John 3 verse 15 we read: "He who hates his brother is a murderer." Hatred is usually so strong that in the heart there is a real desire for death of the person hated. The Lord looks on the heart and sees that attitude as if the act had been committed.

Cruel and thoughtless words and actions always spoil and often ruin the lives of those against whom they are directed. They can be regarded as a form of murder and we are all capable of these things. Let us guard ourselves against falling into such sinful acts and be mindful always that the Lord Jesus' command is that we love one another.

In the book of Proverbs we read, "A good name is a precious ointment." You can destroy a person's reputation - their good name - by malicious gossip. Christians should use their tongues to pray for others and to seek God's blessing for them and not to bring them down. The cause of the gospel can suffer and God grieved and His name dishonoured by slanderous use of the tongue to hurt others. Be careful, then, what you say about others. You do not know what trials they are going through. You do not know what deep waters that brother or sister has been through, so be slow to judge them. Do not ruin their lives by the sinful misuse of your tongue.

Another issue relating to this commandment is that of SELF- injury. For the Christian, the body is the temple of God's Holy Spirit so we are not to engage in anything that will harm or abuse it. Habits such as gluttony or alcohol and tobacco abuse, and self-indulgences that spoil the body physically are to be avoided.

It is possible to allow resentment and bitterness to eat away at your soul and your self-respect to such a point that you might even contemplate taking your own life because you feel it is of little worth. This is the issue of suicide. You may have been so tempted - why was this? Was it perhaps through depression, frustration or a deep sense of failure or hopelessness? Was it anger turned against yourself, or self-pity?

Remember two very tragic men in the Bible. In the Old Testament, King Saul, having turned his back upon God and having been defeated in battle, fell on his own sword and so took his own life. There was no sense of repentance for his wrongdoing and so he had no hope and nowhere to go for help. Judas Iscariot in the New Testament, who betrayed the Lord Jesus, was so overwhelmed with his sense of guilt that he too took his own life. How sad!

The message of the gospel is that even for the greatest of sinners there IS hope and there IS forgiveness if they will only turn to God, acknowledging their sins and placing their trust in Christ Who died for them on the cross. Death is not the end, it is not an escape, but it is a hastening to judgement for the unbeliever. The Bible teaches us that "It is appointed to men once to die and after this the judgement." Listening friend, if you are passing through a dark time, and the tempter is putting thoughts of suicide in your mind, do not listen to him. Turn instead to the One Who loves you, who can turn your life around and give you a lasting hope and peace.

All the commandments of God are positive. We are not to do one thing but we are to do the opposite. We are not to murder, but we are to respect one another. The young are very precious; the old are very precious; the unlovely are very precious; those who are mentally or physically damaged, those with strange quirks of personality are very precious. We do not respect people according to the colour of their skin or their particular background. All nationalities will be around the throne of God in that future day - those of "Every family, language and nation."

To the Christian the Bible says, "Do good to all - especially to those of the household of faith." Murder comes from hate, but the Christian is to be filled with the love of Christ for all men. The Lord Jesus said that we are to "Do good to those who hate you." Human life is a sacred thing, a gift from God, let us respect it and protect it and so obey the commandment that we have been discovering today.

Next time we are going to discover some more principles from this important commandment, and I will explain further that not all killing is to be seen as murder, but

that God has set out strict guidelines for our instruction and for the protection of the innocent.

## The Ten Commandments (8)

### Commandment No. 6 (Continued)

This time we are continuing to look at the sixth commandment, found in Exodus 20 verse 13: "You shall not murder". Here are four, simple, clear words that we cannot misunderstand. This commandment deals with the preservation of human life, and literally means, "You shall do no murder." It is an important principle that when we are discovering the teaching of God's Word, we remember that Scripture is its own interpreter. In other words we must look at the whole counsel of God concerning any subject and not take verses or passages in isolation. It is clear from a study of Scripture that this commandment, while clearly teaching the sanctity of human life, does not condemn ALL killing.

There are times when nations must defend themselves against an attacker and this results in bloodshed. Dreadful though war is, killing in defence of life and to stop an evil aggressor is not murder. In Romans chapter 13 and verse 4 we are told concerning governing authorities that they are "God's servant to do you good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword for nothing. He is God's servant, an agent of wrath, to bring punishment on the wrongdoer." In "bearing the sword" the legally appointed magistrate has the power to execute temporal judgement on capital offenders. That is not murder. Yes, human life must be preserved for it is a gift from God and man is made in the image of God, but the wilful taking of life must be punished.

There are occasions when someone is killed unintentionally. For the people of Israel, in Old Testament times, God made provision for this situation. Seven cities of refuge were built where someone guilty of manslaughter could flee from the wrath of the aggrieved family and be safe until proper justice could be invoked. Accidental manslaughter was treated mercifully, but there was no mercy for wilful killing. In Scripture the death penalty is not regarded as a deterrent, but as a punishment for the act of murder.

In my last talk about this sixth commandment I mentioned that there are several ways in which murder can be committed. I want to come back to this again because, although we may not actually take a life ourselves, we can, just the same, be guilty of it.

We can kill in our minds. In 1 John 3 verse 15 we read: "Whoever hates his brother is a murderer." Jesus also said that hatred and anger in the heart are the equivalent of murder itself. Do you have thoughts like this? Does your anger sometimes cause you to sin in this way? If this is so, turn to the Lord and seek His forgiveness. You may not regard yourself as a murderer, but malicious and hateful thoughts stand condemned by God, who has said through John, "Whoever hates his brother is a murderer."

Then, I mentioned last time that we can in effect kill someone with our tongues. We can think of the terrible murder of our Lord Jesus Christ by the Roman soldiers. They were obeying the orders of their superior officers, but what of the frenzied crowd? They were crying out, "Crucify Him! Crucify Him!" What of the false witnesses at Jesus' so-called trial? What of the religious leaders who had been plotting Jesus' death for months? They were ALL guilty of Christ's death for by their words they accused and by their words they incited His murder.

These words led to actual death, but it is possible by our words to destroy the character of another and so in effect ruin their life. We sometimes call this action "character assassination." Evil gossip can be very destructive and often comes from a deep dislike or resentment or jealousy. This is really an attitude of murder. Words are very powerful and we should be very careful about the things that we say.

Now let's discover three things we need to know about the sin of murder:

First - it is an affront to God, for man is made in the image of God. We read in Genesis chapter 1 verses 26 and 27: "Then God said, 'Let us make man in our image, in our likeness ... so God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created Him; male and female He created them.'"

Each one of us is a unique person. Unlike the animals we are able to build on the knowledge we have. We each have a conscience and within us is a sense of morality - of what is right and wrong, good and evil. As those created in the image of the Living God we have a spiritual capacity for we were created to have a relationship with Him. So to destroy another human being is a very serious thing indeed.

Secondly, murder is what might be described as "A crying sin." The blood of Abel, murdered by his brother Cain, is said in Genesis chapter 4 verse 10, to have cried out to God from the ground. In other words, God knew that Cain had taken his brother's life and God would not ignore that dreadful act.

Writing in the 17th. Century, Thomas Watson said, "If God could have a beast stoned that killed a man, which had not the use of reason to restrain it, how much more will he be incensed against those who against both reason and conscience take away the life of another?"

The blood of a murder victim cries out to God for vengeance, and the Lord God says, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay." Murder is a diabolical sin. Jesus said regarding sinful mankind, "You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning." Satan is the great destroyer and all who destroy life wilfully are his servants, just as Cain was at the beginning of human history.

Thirdly, murder is a polluting sin, it pollutes nations. We read in Numbers chapter 35 verse 33:

"Do not pollute the land where you are. Bloodshed pollutes the land and atonement cannot be made for the land on which blood has been shed, except by the blood of the one who shed it."

Down the centuries there have been many instances of God's judgement falling on nations because of the evil actions of their leaders in the wilful taking of human life for their own ends. God says that such actions pollute the life of any nation. Pollution is something that defiles and makes things unclean, and it is dangerous. God regards a nation where bloodshed is condoned as unclean and the only means of putting this right is for the punishment of those who murder. We read in Revelation chapter 21 verse 8:

"But the cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters and all liars - their place will be in the fiery lake of burning sulphur. This is the second death."

What a warning this is! We are discovering together the moral law of God and we must be in no doubt that God will not and cannot ignore those who break it. But we must also remember that God, in His great love towards us sinners, who have all broken His law in some way, has made it possible for our sins to be covered and forgiven. He has done this through the worst murder in all human history.

Let me quote to you the words of the sermon preached by the apostle Peter to the Jews on the Day of Pentecost. You will find this in Acts chapter 2 verse 22 onwards:

"Men of Israel, listen to this: Jesus of Nazareth was a man accredited by God to you by miracles, wonders and signs, which God did among you through Him, as you yourselves know. This man was handed over to you by God's set purpose and foreknowledge; and you, with the help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing him to the cross. But God raised Him from the dead, freeing Him from the agony of death, because it was impossible for death to keep its hold on Him ...therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ."

As we read on in this account we find the peoples' consciences troubling them and they ask what they must do. The answer that Peter gave them applies to you today if you would have your sins forgiven and know peace with God:

"Repent and be baptised, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ so that your sins may be forgiven. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."

Christ has fulfilled the law of God for us all and in His own body on the cross has paid the penalty for our sins. Will you come to Him today and receive forgiveness and the gift of The Holy Spirit Who will be God's power within you to enable you to defeat Satan and be obedient to the commands of God?

## The Ten Commandments (9)

### Commandment No. 7

In our journey of discovery through the moral laws of the Living God, called "The Ten Commandments", we come this time to number seven. This is found in the Old Testament book of Exodus chapter 20 and verse 14 and it says: "You shall not commit adultery."

In the Bible, the written Word of God, God tells us that certain things are wrong and they are offensive to Him. We saw last time that it is wrong to wilfully take the life of another human being and as we go through the remaining commandments we shall discover other things that God expressly forbids. These laws were not given to restrict us, or to spoil our lives, but rather they were given for our individual good and for the good of society as a whole. They were given by God who knows that sinful people need such laws.

If ever our societies needed to be reminded of this seventh commandment it is today! We need to hear the voice of God saying again, "You shall not commit adultery." What, then, is adultery? It is voluntary sexual intercourse between a married person and a partner other than their lawful husband or wife. It is the ultimate act of unfaithfulness by a married person. So seriously does God regard this sin that He often uses it as a picture of the unfaithfulness of Israel when they went after other gods instead of giving their love to Him alone.

I'm going to look at this subject under three main headings:

First - "What God says about marriage." Second - "What God says about adultery." Third - "Spiritual adultery."

So, first of all, "What does God say about marriage?" Marriage is an ordinance from the time of the creation. It was instituted by God when He created Adam and Eve. In 1 Corinthians 7, a chapter where the apostle Paul writes about the marriage relationship, he says, "Each man should have his own wife, and each woman her own husband." The writer to the Hebrews in chapter 14 verse 4 says: "Marriage should be honoured by all, and the marriage bed kept pure, for God will judge the adulterer, and all the sexually immoral." You will remember that the Lord Jesus honoured marriage by His presence at the wedding in Cana where He turned the water into wine - his first miracle.

Perhaps the greatest testimony to the sanctity of the marriage relationship is that it is used to illustrate the mystical union between Christ and His church. He is called the bridegroom and the church His bride.

The Bible has much to say about the duties and responsibilities of marriage. Each partner has a role to play that is important. If the relationship is to work it must be founded on mutual love and respect. We discover what this relationship should be in Ephesians chapter 5 verses 22 to 28. What Paul teaches here is not popular today, but this is what God says about Christian marriage:

"Wives submit to your husband as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is head of the church, His body, of which He is the Saviour. Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything."

Now you husbands, listen to this!

"Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave Himself for her. In the same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself."

So, in marriage there must be loyalty, honesty, trust and love. The husband is the head of the house, but that authority is tempered by love and respect and a regard for the

feelings of his wife at all times. He does not "lord it" over her, he is not a tyrant, but he is considerate. In the same way, Christian wives are to be submissive, not in a weak or subservient way, but rather recognising the God-given order of the relationship as set out in 1 Corinthians 11 verse 3: "Now I want you to realise that the head of every man is Christ, and the head of the woman is man, and the head of Christ is God."

Secondly, "What does God say about adultery?"

There are eight things that God says in His Word about this sin:

Number one - "It is forbidden" - as this commandment teaches us. Jesus, in His Sermon on the Mount, taught the people (in Matthew 5 verses 27 and 28): "You have heard that it was said, 'Do not commit adultery'. But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart." To emphasise the seriousness of this the Lord went on to say, "If your right eye causes you to sin, gouge it out and throw it away!" So we discover that there is not only actual adultery, but there is adultery in the heart. Such desires must be conquered by the power of the Holy Spirit. They are dangerous and the actual act of adultery always starts with a wrong look. Remember King David who looked upon Bathsheba in this way and this one look led to both adultery and murder. Concerning adultery Job said, "It is wickedness and iniquity, and it is worthy of judgement."

Secondly - the marriage oath to be faithful is very solemn in the sight of God. At marriage two people enter into a covenant. In a Christian marriage they vow to give themselves only to one another to the exclusion of all others. To commit adultery is to betray that covenant and to go back on ones word.

Thirdly - Adultery dishonours God for it is forbidden by His commandment. It is saying to God, "Your laws mean nothing. I will do as I please", and yet these laws were given for our protection and well being. We only have to look around us to see the results of marital unfaithfulness that brings sorrow and hatred and betrayal, and destroys family life. Adultery is degrading to those involved and it is dishonouring to God.

The fourth thing about this sin is that it is wilful. It is deliberate, it is conscious and it is premeditated. Adultery does not happen by accident. What begins as a chance encounter or an unwise relationship, or an improper thought often ends up in actions that lead to adultery. How we need to guard our relationships with those of the opposite sex, that we keep them pure and do not put ourselves in situations that lead to temptation.

Fifthly - Adultery is theft. It is to take that which is forbidden, that which we have no right to. It is taking one who belongs to another.

My sixth point is this: Adultery is very costly. We read these words in Proverbs chapter 6 verses 27 to 29:

"Can a man scoop fire into his lap without his clothes being burned? Can a man walk on hot coals without his feet being scorched? So is he who sleeps with another man's wife; no-one who touches her will go unpunished."

There is always a price to be paid for unfaithfulness as many have found to their cost. There is the burning of a troubled conscience and the ruining of other relationships. There is the effect that adulterous unions have on any children of the marriage. Yes, adultery is very costly, not only where human relationships are concerned, but also, as with any sin, where any relationship with God is concerned.

The seventh thing we discover about adultery is that it destroys reputations. Thomas Watson says, "Some when they get wounds, get honour. The soldier's wounds are full of honour. The martyr's wounds for Christ are also honourable. But the adulterer gets wounds but no honour to his name. His reproach will not be wiped away." There are wounds to reputation that no doctor can heal. There is an old Latin saying: "Lust's practice is to make a joyful entrance, but she leaves in misery."

And number eight is this: "Adultery without repentance damns the soul." Paul told the Corinthians, "Adulterers will not inherit the kingdom of God." That's 1 Corinthians 6 verses 9 and 10. There is forgiveness for those who truly repent of this sin and turn from it, just as there is for all sinners. If you are in such a relationship, come out of it. Seek the forgiveness of God and of those you have wronged, and allow the Lord to heal you. It will not be easy, but it is the only way to know true peace of mind and real joy in your life.

My final heading is: "Spiritual adultery."

Here we have a warning for all who are followers of the Lord Jesus. I have already referred to the fact that when the Children of Israel were unfaithful to God and went after other, false gods they were described as being adulterers. They were in covenant relationship to God their Saviour but they gave their allegiance and worship to another.

The fact is that the Lord Jesus Christ wants us to live for Him. If you are a Christian you belong to Christ, you are not your own, you were bought with His precious blood shed on Calvary. Spiritual adultery means living for this world and not living for the Saviour. We cannot serve two masters. We cannot have one foot in Christ's camp and the other in the world. We must remain true to Christ no matter what the cost.

There are those who say they are Christians and yet they are happy to join hands and hearts with those who deny the true gospel in various ways. That is spiritual adultery. God warned Old Testament Israel about this. They were to be separate from all the pagan practices and religions of the nations around them. They were called to be holy and to be separate. As a Christian you are in a covenant relationship with God through the Lord Jesus and you are to remain faithful to Him.

May the Lord help us all to obey this command in both its physical and spiritual applications.

## The Ten Commandments (10)

### Commandment No. 8

We have already discovered that the commandments were given to Moses many centuries ago for the people of Israel, but they have much to say to us today. They are the unchangeable law of the Living God given for our good, and they tell us how we should be living in relation to both God and our fellow men.

We have seen that the first four of these commandments deal with our relationship to God: We are to have no other gods before Him; we are not to make idols and worship them; we are not to misuse the name of God in swearing or in a careless manner, and we are to keep one day each week set apart for Him. The remaining six commandments have to do with our behaviour towards our fellow men: We are to honour our parents; we are not to murder and we are not to commit adultery, as we saw last time. Today we are looking at the eighth commandment, found in Exodus chapter 20 verse 15. This commandment says: "You shall not steal."

Theft, robbery, stealing - these are all too common in our world today. The previous commandment concerning adultery has to do with God's holiness. This commandment has to do with God's justice and we are going to look at three things concerning this injunction that we must not steal:

Number one - "The right to our own property". Number two - "What is stealing?" Number three - "What it means to steal from God."

First then, "The right to our own property."

In Bible times landowners placed landmarks as a line of demarcation along the boundaries of their fields. This is still a practice today and boundaries are carefully drawn so that we can know what belongs to us and what belongs to our neighbours. We all have things in our homes that belong exclusively to us or to our family. No one else has a right to these things unless we choose to give them away. In some countries there is what we call "common land" which is open to all people. It is usually cared for by local authorities and no individual has the right to enclose it and prevent others from crossing it. To do so would be to steal it from everyone else.

We have no right to someone else's property even though we may want it, or need it, or feel that they do not need it. No matter how unfair we might think things are; no matter how difficult our circumstances, there can be no justification in stealing another's property.

Secondly, "What is stealing?" This may seem to be obvious, but there are many aspects to stealing which are not recognised or which are ignored. We would all see robbery and burglary as acts of stealing. Occasionally these acts are committed out of need but usually out of greed. Theft is a cruel, callous offence, especially when aimed at an individual. Such stealing hurts the victims very deeply and some are left permanently affected by fear. When homes are broken into there is always a feeling of violation.

But stealing takes many forms. It is not always an open act of violence or the breaking and entering of a home. It can be other acts of dishonesty such as overcharging for goods and services, or using false measures so that the purchaser receives less than he paid for. This was something for which God - the God of justice - condemned the people of Israel. They were cheating one another with false measures and false weights. Does this sound familiar? It is a form of stealing.

And then there is something that the Bible refers to as "usury". This is the lending of money at an excessively high rate of interest. At first the lender seems very helpful, especially if the need is great. But the borrower soon finds himself frighteningly indebted to the lender, whether an individual or an organisation. The Hebrew word for usury has

the meaning "to bite." It is as though the usurer is a wild animal putting its teeth into its victim and as it were drawing blood as well as interest. The greedy money lender is a robber.

But what about the employer who does not pay fair wages? He is in effect stealing his employees' time. Equally, employees who do not do a fair day's work are not giving value for the money they earn and they, too, are guilty of stealing their employers time.

I am sure that you can think of many other ways of stealing. The unauthorised 'phone call from the office; the inflating of expenses claims; and we could go on. All these break the commandment that we should not steal. Judas Iscariot was a thief. The Bible tells us that he looked after the money for the disciples, but he betrayed that trust and stole from the bag. To steal is to disobey God as well as to break the laws of our land and can only bring dishonour on the name of the Lord. Christians are to be scrupulous in their honesty, avoiding all appearance of evil.

Thirdly, "What does it mean to steal from God?"

We can do this by putting our own interests first. Christians have been redeemed at a great cost - the precious blood of our Lord Jesus Christ. Christians are, as it were, "under new management." So we are not to merely live for ourselves and our own selfish desires. The Lord Jesus is to be our role model and He said that we are to "Seek first the kingdom of God". We are to put Him first in our lives to serve Him with the gifts and abilities He has given to us. We are, as Paul says in Romans chapter 12 verse 1, to offer our bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God. To do this is a spiritual act of worship. So do not rob God by keeping from Him any part of your life.

We can steal from God by not giving Him our time. Listen again to Paul, this time in Ephesians chapter 5 verses 15 and 16:

"Be very careful, then, how you live - not as unwise but as wise, making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil."

The King James Version says, "Redeeming the time, because the days are evil." How do you spend your time? It is so easy to allow even legitimate things to so occupy us that we do not give time to the things of God. How much time do we spend in prayer, in Bible study, in preparation for the Lord's work in our churches or in our neighbourhood? We have time for the things we want to do, but do we have time for other people? Our Lord was never too busy to stop and listen or to reach out a hand to help those who came to Him.

The days in which we live are evil, just as they were when Paul wrote to the Ephesians, and so we must take every opportunity to evangelise young and older while there is time. Do not rob God of time, but sanctify your days to Him and you will not go unrewarded as He uses you to the blessing of others.

In a previous talk we were looking at the fourth commandment, which is about keeping the Sabbath Day set apart for God. We can steal from God by ignoring this commandment and not observing a Sabbath Day. We can steal from God by only giving Him a part of that day and then spending the rest pursuing our own pleasures. Christians observe the first day of the week, the day when Christ was raised from death, as the day to remember Him and to serve Him. It is a day when our time can be dedicated to the Lord. Let us not rob God of His day, but as we are able, where we are, give Him our Sabbath Day.

In Malachi, the last book in the Old Testament, chapter 3 and verse 8, God is speaking through the prophet and saying to the people of Israel, "Will a man rob God? Yet you rob me." And the people ask, "How do we rob you?". The answer is given, "In tithes and offerings." The Israelites were required to give a tithe, or a tenth, of their produce as provision for the Levites who had no land of their own. This was a very important requirement so that the priests could function unhindered by concerns as to what they

would eat and so that God's work could be financed. In Malachi's time the people were failing to bring their tithes and so were in effect robbing God of what was His due.

It is possible for us to steal from God by not giving to Him what is His due. Sacrificial, joyful giving is a part of true worship. We only give back to God what He has graciously entrusted to us. Whatever we can give is nothing compared with what He has given. We remember the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ who, "Though He was rich, yet for our sakes became poor that we through His poverty might become rich."

The Lord Jesus commended sacrificial giving when He saw a woman put a very tiny coin into the Temple treasury knowing that she had in fact given all that she had. We are called to be faithful stewards of all the Lord has given to us. We are to give so that God's work can go forward unhindered. When we do this we are assured of God's blessing. Listen to what the Lord said to the people of Israel through Malachi:

"Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this says the Lord Almighty, and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that you will not have room enough for it."

Let us not steal from God, but let us give to Him our time, our talents and our gifts, and so experience this wonderful blessing He promises!

## The Ten Commandments (11)

### Commandment No. 9

This time we look at the ninth of the Ten Commandments found in Exodus chapter 20. We have been discovering that these laws, given by God, are still valid today. They were given originally to Moses for the benefit of the people of Israel, but because they are the word of God which will never pass away they are applicable to all people in every age and in every culture.

The ninth commandment, found in verse 16 of Exodus chapter 20 says this: "You shall not give false testimony against your neighbour." It was Thomas Watson who said three hundred years ago, "The tongue, which was at first made to be an organ of God's praise, is now become an instrument of unrighteousness."

This commandment contains three warnings: warnings about DECEIVING and DERIDING and DESTROYING our neighbour. Let's look first of all at the warning about deceiving our neighbour.

To bear false witness is to deceive and to lie. Proverbs tells us that "Lying lips are an abomination to the Lord, but those who deal truthfully are His delight". Lying is not usually an isolated sin and it usually paves the way for other sins. One lie almost always leads to the telling of another and so the web of deceit and untruthfulness grows. The early church father Jerome said, "When you speak, let your word be as authentic as your oath. Imitate God Who is the pattern of the truth."

What contempt for others is shown by those who lie and deceive? They are basically saying to their victim, "You're worthless. You don't matter at all. You will believe whatever I tell you and you will be deceived. I will look into your eyes and think 'You poor fool, if only you knew the truth!'" The liar who bears false witness against his neighbour is callous and cruel because he does not care about the consequences of his lying. Those who deceive and lie should remember that they may deceive men, but God Who sees the hearts of all is never deceived. One day an account will have to be given for every idle word and every lie.

The Christian's word is to open and truthful. Paul reminded the Colossian Christians, in chapter 4 verse 6 of his letter, that their conversation should "be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone." There is no grace in a deceiving tongue and no love in speaking falsely against our neighbour.

Secondly, this commandment is a warning against deriding our neighbour. To deride a person is to speak scornfully and contemptuously about them. To bear false witness against a person ruins that person's reputation. It ruins their character and pulls them down in the eyes of others. You will remember how the false accusation of Potipher's wife put innocent Joseph in prison. It was the lies against him by the evil Queen Jezebel that had Naboth killed. The apostle Paul knew what it was to be maligned by false teachers. It was, of all people, the religious leaders who said that Jesus had a devil, and that He did miracles by the power of Satan. They accused Him of sedition and blasphemy, but it was their lies that were blasphemous. False accusers were brought to the trial of the Lord Jesus to bear false testimony against Him, in order to defame and deride Him and to have Him condemned.

Such false witness is an evil thing, and it is against this sin that the ninth commandment warns us. So let us be very carefully how we speak about others, especially our fellow Christians. As believers we are exhorted to build one another up in our faith and not to pull one another down.

With our words we can either encourage or destroy others, and this brings me to the third warning to be discovered in this commandment. The warning is that by false witness we can effectively destroy the life of another person. We may not kill them in the

literal sense, but our saying about them things that are untrue can have a devastating consequence in their life.

One way we can do this, sometimes unwittingly, even unintentionally, is to gossip about them. There is something in most of us that enjoys gossip! Proverbs 18 verse 8 says, "The words of a gossip are like choice morsels; they go down to a man's inmost parts." We like to hear things about other people, especially if it is something that is perhaps scandalous. Among Christians this should not be for such gossip is not harmless as some would have us believe, it is always destructive. Such gossip in a church is a tragedy for it can destroy the fellowship, and it most certainly grieves the Holy Spirit. It will hinder prayer and stifle blessing if left unchecked.

Someone has suggested that before ever we speak about someone else we should "think" - that is, T H I N K. Is what I am going to say concerning that person: True - is it Helpful - is it Inspiring - is it Necessary - and is it Kind? So before you speak - THINK!

There are those who bear false witness to our Lord Jesus Christ in our day, just as they did at His trial before Pilate. They deny the truth by undermining His holy word. By their false witness they deny our Lord's deity, or His humanity. They deny that His death on the cross was for our sins, and they deny His bodily resurrection from the dead. There are some who say that we cannot know personal salvation and the assurance of sins forgiven and eternal life. In all this they bear false testimony and in so doing effectively destroy those who believe them.

Christians are called to bear true and faithful witness to the gospel. If you are not a Christian, hear the testimony of all the Old Testament writers concerning the Lord Jesus Christ. Did you know that they all speak of Him? Hear the true testimony of God Who cannot lie - "This is my Son, Whom I love; with Him I am well pleased." Hear the testimony of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself: "I am the way, the truth and the life, no one comes to the Father except through me." Hear the testimony of all true believers who have put their trust in Him and found His word to be true and faithful.

So we have discovered on this programme that God's command to us is that we must not deceive, or deride, or destroy our neighbour by the things that we say about them. We need to guard our lips at all times so that we do not either deliberately or unwittingly break this commandment. How much better it is to speak well of one another and to always try to encourage and build up our fellow Christians. It is the Christian's calling to be honest and truthful in word and deed.

In the next study we will be thinking about the last of these Ten Commandments given by God. This is one which is very appropriate for the day in which we live when the desire for material things often outweighs the desire for spiritual realities. This commandment says: "You shall not covet - or desperately want - something your neighbour has."

## The Ten Commandments (12)

### Commandment No. 10

We have been looking at the laws given by God to Moses for the people of Israel. They were given to them not only as rules by which to order their lives, but to teach them that the Living God is holy and just. We know these laws as "The Ten Commandments" and we have discovered that they set God's standard for our relationships with one another and with Him.

This time we are looking at the last of these commandments and this is found in Exodus chapter 20 verse 17. Here is what it says:

"You shall not covet your neighbour's house. You shall not covet your neighbour's wife, or his manservant or maidservant, his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbour."

We are going to look at this commandment under four headings:

First: "What does it mean to covet something?"

Second: "What forms does covetousness take?"

Third: "Why is wrong to covet?"

And fourth: "What is the alternative to coveting?"

Let me say this, before we look at the first question. If you think that this commandment has nothing to do with you because it speaks about servants and animals, keep listening because we will be discovering that the principles behind this commandment are relevant to every society in every age!

So, "What is covetousness?" In the New Testament two Greek words are used for covetousness. One means, "An insatiable desire for getting the world." The other means, "An inordinate love of the world." In other words, the material things of this world are seen as so important, so precious, so essential to happiness and fulfilment that they are pursued and longed for above all else. Covetousness is a form of greed. Paul says in Colossians chapter 3 verse 5 that covetousness is in fact idolatry, and just in case it is thought that this commandment is not as important as the others, listen to the rest of what Paul says to the Christians at Colossae:

"Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil, desires and greed (or covetousness) which is idolatry. Because of these the wrath of God is coming."

We have discovered in a previous talk that we are not to make or worship idols. And we have found that an idol is anything that takes the place of God in our lives. So, when we covet something so much that we are taken-up with obtaining it, we are in fact worshipping that thing - and that is idolatry.

So covetousness is the inordinate desire for something we do not have or for the possessions of another.

My second question is this: "What forms does covetousness take?"

If we think carefully about covetousness, we will find that it leads to the breaking of the previous nine commandments. I have just said that to covet is an act of idolatry, and this breaks the first and second commandments. To desire money and material things more than God is to worship these things and put them in the place that belongs to Him.

A Christian whose covetousness is seen by others brings dishonour on the name of the Lord, and so he breaks the third commandment that reminds us that God's name is to be revered. The pursuit of material gain on the Lord's Day is a covetous attitude and this breaks the fourth commandment that calls on us to keep that day set apart for God.

Parents can be dishonoured and used as a means to an end by children who covet their possessions or their wealth. "What are they worth to me?" is the burning question in their hearts. With this attitude they break the fifth commandment that parents are to be honoured. Often covetousness leads to the breaking of the sixth commandment that "You shall not murder." How many have killed for the love of money!

How wise God is when He includes in this injunction against coveting the desire for a neighbour's wife. A man or woman covets and desires the partner of another. It does not matter to them that he or she is married, that they are sinning against their own bodies, that solemn vows are being broken and relationships violated. This kind of coveting leads to the breaking of the seventh commandment - "You shall not commit adultery."

The eighth commandment is that we must not steal. Covetousness is at the heart of all theft. The Bible reminds us that it is the LOVE of money that is the root of all kinds of evil. The covetous person can also break the ninth commandment that forbids the giving of false testimony against another. The covetous are happy to falsely accuse and condemn others if the price is right.

Are you beginning to get the picture - that this tenth commandment is at the foundation of them all, and is so important? The strong desire to have another's possessions, whatever they may be, leads to temptation - the temptation to obtain those things no matter what it takes. There are three key factors in every temptation. They are: Seeing, Desiring and Taking.

In Genesis chapter 3 verse 6 we read how the first woman, Eve, SAW the forbidden fruit and she DESIRED it and then she TOOK it. In Joshua chapter 7 we read of a man called Achan who saw some of the treasures of Jericho and coveted them. He saw beautiful clothes and he saw gold and silver and he took them, contrary to the express command of God. He confessed to Joshua, "When I SAW these things, I COVETED them and TOOK them. They are hidden in the ground inside my tent." His actions almost brought disaster on the nation. We read of David in relation to Bathsheba, the wife of Uriah the Hittite, that he Saw her, he WANTED her and he TOOK her.

Eve, Achan and David each took what was expressly forbidden by God. Eve took the forbidden fruit. Achan took the forbidden wealth. David took the forbidden person. Each one suffered the consequences of their covetousness. To covet is to desire those things which in the infinite wisdom of God are not part of His will for our lives, and which He knows will only harm us.

My third question is: "Why is it wrong to covet?"

Firstly, covetousness displays dissatisfaction and discontentment. It is the popular belief that true satisfaction and fulfilment in life can only be gained through material possessions and living for selfish desires. This is a lie. Jesus said, in Luke 12 verse 15:

"Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; a man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions."

Secondly, covetousness is wrong because God says it is wrong. In another context someone has said, "God says it. I believe it. That settles it!" In other words, for the Christian, the fact that God has said that we must not covet should be sufficient reason for us to know that it is wrong.

Let's finish this consideration of the tenth commandment by asking the question: "What is the alternative to a covetous spirit?"

First we must recognise this sin for what it really is. It is a sin against God. Secondly, there must be deep repentance. And thirdly we must learn to trust totally in the Lord Jesus Christ. He is a faithful and loving Saviour Who gave Himself for our sins on the cross. Fourthly we need to trust in God's Word. We need to believe the promises of God that He will not fail His people. Fifthly, we need to find our contentment in Christ alone and to rest on the hope we have in Him.

An alternative to being taken-up with seeking after material things is to serve the Lord. The Lord Jesus said that we are to "Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness" and then we need not worry about possessions and material things.

The apostle Paul, writing to the Philippian Christians in chapter 4 verses 11 and 12 says this:

"For I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation."

The secret of this contentment was his faith in Christ. He could say later to the Philippians:

"And my God will meet all your needs according to His glorious riches in Christ Jesus."

Finally, covet the glory of God. What is man's chief end? It is to glorify God and enjoy HIM forever. May the Lord help us to obey both the spirit and the letter of all these commandments as we seek to follow the Lord Jesus Christ.