

THE LAW OF LIFE

Ellet J. Waggoner



The 10 Laws of Life

- I. “And God spoke all these words, saying: “I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. “You shall have no other gods before Me.

- II. “You shall not make for yourself a carved image—any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth; you shall not bow down to them nor serve them. For I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generations of those who hate Me, but showing mercy to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments.

- III. “You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain, for the Lord will not hold him guiltless who takes His name in vain.

IV. “Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord your God. In it you shall do no work: you, nor your son, nor your daughter, nor your male servant, nor your female servant, nor your cattle, nor your stranger who is within your gates. For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it.

V. “Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long upon the land which the Lord your God is giving you.

VI. “You shall not murder.

VII. “You shall not commit adultery.

VIII. “You shall not steal.

IX. “You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.

X. “You shall not covet your neighbor’s house; you shall not covet your neighbor’s wife, nor his male servant, nor his female servant, nor his ox, nor his donkey, nor anything that is your neighbor’s.” (Ex. 20:1–17)

Chapter 1

The 1st Law of Life

“And God spoke all these words, saying: “I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. “You shall have no other gods before Me.” (Ex. 20:1–3)

This is the first and greatest commandment, and the one which comprehends all the others. It is the summing up of all whole law, for we read that the first and great commandment is, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.” (Matt. 22:37) “And the second is like it: “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” (v. 39) It is not separate from the first, but is included in it, since “love is of God,” and only as the love of God is shed abroad in one’s heart can one love his neighbor as himself. So to love the Lord with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind,—that is, to have no other gods before Him,—is the sum of human duty. “There is no other God but one. For even if

there are so-called gods, whether in heaven or on earth (as there are many gods and many lords), yet for us there is one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we for Him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, through whom are all things, and through whom we live.” (1 Cor. 8:4–6) Therefore, “Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one! You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength.” (Deut. 6:4–5)

The Law is a Relic of the Past

In these days the commandments are thought by many to be out of date. They are regarded generally as a relic of the past age and an inferior civilization. People think that Christianity has outgrown them, and has brought in larger and more perfect views of truth and duty. Ministers of the Gospel that have a very narrow experience, cannot instruct people as to what is comprehended in the Ten Commandments. Those who hold such views need to pray the prayer of the Psalmist: “Open my eyes, that I may see Wondrous things from Your law.” (Ps. 119:18) It is their minds that are narrow,

and not the commandment, for the “commandment is exceedingly broad” (v. 96). Therefore it is, as God said of Ephraim, “I have written for him the great things of My law, but they were considered a strange thing.” (Hos. 8:12) “The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul; the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple; the statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes; the fear of the Lord is clean, enduring forever; the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether.” (Ps. 19:7–9) Therefore the one who regards the law as a strange thing, must be a stranger to conversion, righteousness, purity, and perfection.

No soul, either in this world or in the world to come, whether man or angel, can get beyond this one precept, “You shall have no other gods before Me,” or its other form, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.” It is obvious that to get beyond this commandment would be to break it, since it would be having other gods before the true

God.

As there are so many who think that the commandments are out of date, it is not surprising that they regard this one as not necessary. Of course they will admit that it is necessary to preach it in India and China and other lands where false gods are worshipped; but while not consciously disparaging it, they think that we stand in no need of it, since we do not worship other gods. This is a great mistake; there is not a Christian in any country who cannot say with Isaiah: “O Lord our God, other lords beside Thee have had dominion over us.” “O Lord our God, masters besides You have had dominion over us.” (Isa. 26:13)

Worship is Service

When Jesus repelled the temptation of Satan, He said to him, “Away with you, Satan! For it is written, ‘You shall worship the Lord your God, and Him only you shall serve.’” (Matt. 4:10) So the Apostle Paul said to the ship’s company with whom he sailed, “There stood by me this night an

angel of the God to whom I belong and whom I serve.” (Acts 27:23) The distinguishing characteristic of the one who recognizes the Lord as his God, is service. Therefore the commandment, “You shall have no other gods before Me,” is simply, “You shall serve Me only.” And so, as we have seen, it means that we shall love Him only, love Him with all the heart, mind, soul, and strength. Just to the extent that this is not done, has one other gods before Him. When we see the commandment in this light, we shall be forced to conclude that the proportion of people who violate it cannot be any greater in Africa, India, or than it is in America.

Who Can Keep the Commandments?

Just before Joshua died, he gathered all the people and the elders of Israel together, and recounted to them what God had done for them, saying, “Now therefore, fear the Lord, serve Him in sincerity and in truth, and put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the River and in Egypt. Serve the Lord! And if it seems

evil to you to serve the Lord, choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you dwell. But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.” And then he said, “Far be it from us that we should forsake the Lord to serve other gods; for the Lord our God is He who brought us and our fathers up out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage, . . . We also will serve the Lord, for He is our God.” (Josh. 24:14–18)

That certainly was a good declaration, but Joshua immediately replied to them, “You cannot serve the Lord, for He is a holy God.” (Josh. 24:19) How this must have dashed the spirits of those Israelite; and yet it is true of us as of them, and it contains a wonderful promise, if we will but take it. It does not mean that God cannot be served, for Joshua had just said, “As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.” Paul declared that he served the Lord. But it does mean that only holy people can serve a holy God; and since God says to us,

“You shall worship the Lord your God, and Him only you shall serve” (Luke 4:8), we may take it as the assurance that He will sanctify us if we will yield to Him, so that it will be possible for us to serve Him perfectly. The Lord “will sit as a refiner and a purifier of silver; He will purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer to the Lord an offering in righteousness.” (Mal. 3:3) This shows how we may keep the commandments. We do not keep them in order to be righteous, but God makes us righteous,—frees us from the bondage of sin,—in order that we may keep them. Only when God has cleansed the heart, and driven out every idol, can this first and great commandment be kept.

Love Means Giving

All this shows the supreme importance of this commandment to everybody, everywhere, and at all times. “Love is the fulfillment of the law” (Rom. 13:10), and love means giving. “God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son.” “He loved me, and gave Himself for me.”

“In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.” (1 John 4:10) God showed His love for us in giving Himself for us. Therefore we can show our love to Him only by giving ourselves to Him, and acknowledging His right to have sole control of us.

When Paul said that he served God, he said also, “to whom I belong.” Therefore the commandment, “You shall have no other gods before Me,” or its fuller expression, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength,” means that we must give to the Lord our whole heart, our whole life, and every faculty of mind and body. “With all your strength,” means not only all the strength that we now have, but all that we ought to have, all that is possible for God to exert through our bodies.

It makes a vast difference who handles an instrument. A very good instrument may do very poor work in untrained hands; but when the master

takes hold of it, the result is different. So while we are weak, and we have made ourselves unnaturally weak through our failure to serve God, we are to yield our members as instruments of righteousness unto God, that He may not merely receive from us the poor strength of which we are conscious, but that He may do through us exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power which works in us. Those who believe, will know the exceeding greatness of His power, according to the working of His mighty power which He wrought in Christ; and although we are now without strength, yet when in love and loyalty we yield ourselves to Him for service, His own mighty power in us will be counted to us as service which we have rendered.

Holiness is Whole Service

Hereby may we readily know whether or not we have other gods before Him. If we are not ready to every good work, if there is any organ of our body or any portion of our mind not controlled by Him; if in any degree our will has not been

completely yielded to Him; if we are servants of our own flesh; if any sinful propensity has dominion over us to any degree, just to that extent are we violating the first commandment. And so we see that the keeping of this commandment means health, for there are many people who with sorrow say that they cannot serve the Lord as they would like to, because of their feeble condition. They are loaded down with different diseases, but God says, “I am the Lord who heals you” (Ex. 15:26), or “the Lord your Physician.” He requires us to serve Him with our whole life, with our whole strength, and this means that He expects us to be whole, in order that we may serve Him perfectly. A whole person is a holy person, and since, as we have learned, only a holy person can serve a holy God, we have the assurance that if we will yield our bodies to His life, He will heal us so that we may give to Him whole service. If we do not do this, if we continue to violate the laws of life, thus weakening our bodies or any member of our bodies, we are worshipping other gods beside Him.

Day by day we pray or ought to, “Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.” Christ said, “The kingdom of God is within you.” (Luke 17:21) God is King over all the earth, for “the earth is the Lord’s and all its fulness” (Ps. 24:1), although His right to rule is not acknowledged in the earth. Even so we are His rightful kingdom, although He has not been allowed to rule in our hearts. So when we pray the Lord’s prayer understandingly, we are saying to the Lord, “I belong to You; You rule in the midst of Your enemies, pulling down strongholds, casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.”

We are a people of God’s own possession. But evil cannot dwell with Him; therefore if there is filthiness of the flesh or spirit, He is crowded out from His rightful dominion, and other gods are put in His place. “And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said: “I will dwell in them

And walk among them. I will be their God, And they shall be My people.” (2 Cor. 6:16)

Can we say to the Lord, “Whom have I in heaven but You? And there is none upon earth that I desire besides You.” (Ps. 73:25)? To many this seems a fearful cutting off of all the pleasure of life, but that is only because they do not know Him, and that in His presence is fulness of joy. In Him all things consist, and without Him we have really nothing, for “there is none other God but one.” “He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?” (Rom. 8:32)

Preparation for Christ’s Coming

The keeping of this first commandment is the necessary preparation for the coming of the Lord. “We know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure” (1 John 3:2, 3). We shall then see Him as He is, because we shall have

already been changed into His image by holding Him. Therefore to this end the message is proclaimed, “Behold your God!” No other God is to intervene to shut off the view. Because the hour of His Judgment has come, we are to “fear God and give glory to Him” “and worship Him who made heaven and earth, the sea and springs of waters” (Rev. 14:7). This, we see, is nothing more than the repetition of the first commandment. We are to know Him only, and Christ came to declare Him. The commandment is life everlasting (John 12:50), and it is eternal life to know God. (John 17:3). Those who know Him will put their trust in Him, and when He appears will say, “Behold, this is our God” (Isa. 25:9).

The Essence of Heathenism

Christ said, “do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But seek first the kingdom of

God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you” (Matt. 6:31–33). The word “Gentile” means heathen, and the characteristic of the heathen is to be anxious, and to worry about temporal affairs. And herein many professed Christians show that they have not been wholly emancipated from heathenism. “Times are hard; coals are dear; work is scarce; clothes are wearing out, and we cannot see where the money is coming from to replace them.” They forget that their heavenly Father knows that they have need of all these things. By such expressions of anxiety and doubt, they virtually say that the God whom they serve is no different from the gods of wood and stone that the heathen worship. “After all these things the Gentiles seek,” because they know that their gods cannot provide for them. They know that they must provide for themselves, so far as their gods are concerned. “But our God is in heaven; He does whatever He pleases” (Ps. 115:3). He is the Universal Provider. “He gives to all life, breath, and all things” (Acts 17:25). To doubt that all things that we need will be supplied, because we cannot see how they are to come, is to be like the

heathen who do not believe in a god that they cannot see.

The Sign of the True God

After Jesus had healed the man born blind, He found him and said to him, “Do you believe in the Son of God?” and the man said, “Who is He, Lord, that I may believe in Him?” In like manner, when the commandment “You shall have no other gods before Me,” is preached, men might say, “Who is this God, that we may worship Him?” God has provided beforehand the answer to this question. He says, “Moreover I also gave them My Sabbaths, to be a sign between them and Me, that they might know that I am the Lord who sanctifies them” (Ezek. 20:12) and “hallow My Sabbaths, and they will be a sign between Me and you, that you may know that I am the Lord your God” (v. 20). The true God is the God who sanctifies, and delivers from the bondage of sin. He delivers and sanctifies by His creative power, which is made known through the Sabbath. For when He had made all things new, He rested, and when we are wholly

passive in His hands, we rest in Him, having been made new.

The one great question of the ages is, “Who is God?” It was first introduced when Satan said, “I will be like the Most High,” attempting to put himself in the place of God. The same spirit he instilled into his angels, so that there are multitudes of false gods. Everyone who follows Satan is filled with the same spirit, the spirit of self-seeking, self-exaltation. But it is not in this way that men know God, or become like Him. Christ, who is the manifestation of God, says, “Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls” (Matt. 11:29). God reveals His divinity in the gift of His only begotten Son, who gives His life for the redemption of the world. By self-surrender, the complete denial of self, we become acquainted with God. Only by self-abasement are we lifted up into the high and holy place, to dwell with Him who inhabits eternity.

Satan has done everything that he could do to

hide God and His power from men. The Sabbath, which is God's memorial, he has made the busiest day of the week, the day on which, humanly speaking, it seems most inconvenient to rest from labor. And right here is the strongest test as to whether men recognize and worship the true God. Is He able to give life? Can God clothe those who trust in Him? Can He give bread in the wilderness? How many fully convinced of their duty to keep the Sabbath, have come to this point and have wavered and turned back; and yet they profess to believe in God as the Saviour of their souls, the One who will keep them alive throughout eternity. But do they believe? Does one really trust God for his soul's eternal salvation, if he cannot trust Him for the support of his body for this short life, which is but for a moment?

The Psalmist said: "I made haste, and did not delay to keep Your commandments" (Ps. 119:60). In this is shown true worship of God. There are many who come face to face with the Sabbath law, who say that they will keep it as soon as they can get their business into proper shape or can dispose

of it. Some have debts, and think that they must continue their present employment which they regard as sure, until they get their debts paid. Then they will be prepared to keep the Sabbath. But that does not indicate such trust in God as must characterize one who worships Him only. There is really no difference between the one who waits till he can pay the debt of a hundred pounds, and the one who says, "I am a poor man, with nothing to live on; as soon as I have one hundred pounds in hand, then I can serve the Lord without fear of coming to want." So when he does begin his supposed service, he is not really trusting God, but what he himself has done. All distrust of God, even to the slightest degree, is a violation of the commandment, "You shall have no other gods before Me."

Deliverance from Egypt

What a grand thing it is to know that God is a holy God and that He has power to save. This is the sum of the whole matter, and we end where we began: "I am the Lord your God, who brought you

out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.” But some will say, “We have not been brought out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.” Then it is time you were. Do not deceive yourselves with the thought, “We are Abraham’s descendants, and have never been in bondage to anyone;” for “whoever commits sin is a slave of sin.” One of the names of Egypt, the name which the Lord gave it, is Rahab; which means pride, boastfulness. (See Isa. 30:7, NKJV). Egypt is a synonym for self-exaltation and defiance of God. The king of Egypt said: “Who is the Lord, that I should obey His voice to let Israel go? I do not know the Lord.” God makes Himself known to us when we are in the bondage of sin, and delivers us that we may serve Him. We cannot serve Him while we are the servants of sin. “You cannot serve God and mammon.”

When God brings us out of bondage, we find that the commandment which we thought was a grievous yoke is liberty itself. So far is it from being a yoke of bondage that only free men can keep, it gives freedom; “for the law of the Spirit of

life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death” (Rom. 8:2). Those who seek His precepts are sure to walk at liberty. And so the commandment, instead of being an arbitrary rule, is a glorious promise. Instead of telling us merely what we must or must not do, it gives it to us and makes sure to us all the holiness that it would have us render. The power by which Rahab (Egypt) was broken (Isa. 51:9-11), and all the enemies of the Lord scattered, casts out from us all strange gods.

Compare Ex. 20:1-3, which we have quoted so often, with Ps. 81:8-10. We find that God, who delivers from bondage, says: “O Israel, if you will listen to Me! There shall be no foreign god among you; nor shall you worship any foreign god.” We listen to Him, and we are free, and henceforth sin shall have no dominion over us. All other gods have held us in the most degrading bondage; they have made us to be hateful and unlovely. But God, who is altogether lovely, makes us free as Himself, that we may worship Him in the beauty of holiness. Then He says, “You shall have no other gods before Me,” and we delight in the assurance, for we

know that He means, I am your God and I have called you by name; you are Mine; henceforth I will defend you from every false god; I will be responsible for your freedom, so long as you listen to My words. I will protect you from the roaring lion, and from the sin that crouches at the door. Nothing shall by any means hurt you; I will care for My own, and save you from the fury of the oppressor. And we in turn will say, “God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble” (Ps. 46:1). “Behold, God is my salvation, I will trust and not be afraid; “For Yah, the Lord, is my strength and song; He also has become my salvation’ ” (Isaiah 12:2).

Chapter 2

The 2nd Law of Life

“You shall not make for yourself a carved image—any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth; you shall not bow down to them nor serve them. For I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generations of those who hate Me, but showing mercy to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments” (Ex. 20:4–6).

The first commandment runs through the entire decalogue. It is indeed the basis of all the other commandments, and they are all but the drawing out of this one. It teaches love to God with the whole being; and “love is the fulfillment of the law” (Rom. 13:10). To keep God’s commandments is to love Him. (1 John 5:3). He that keeps the whole law, and yet offends in one point, is guilty of all. (James 2:10). Conversely, whoever really keeps

one, keeps all, for the law is a unit; it is not ten separate items, but one word, given by one God. If one could keep nine parts of the law, or ninety-nine hundredths of it, and yet transgress the other part, he would show that his seeming obedience was not really obedience, but only will worship. The disregarding of one precept would show that he did not respect the authority of the lawgiver, but that he simply pleases himself, as well in his seeming obedience as in his disobedience.

“You shall not make for yourself a carved image—any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth; you shall not bow down to them nor serve them. For I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generations of those who hate Me, but showing mercy to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments” (Ex. 20:4–6).

A Perversion of the Commandment

Before we deal at length with the positive teaching of this commandment, we must notice a common misunderstanding of it. There are some who attempt to cover up their failure in some points, by an excess of zeal in something else; or else they would divert attention from something which they are transgressing, by exaggerating some other commandment, and thus making it seem impossible to keep it. They will say, “You do not keep this,” thereby implying that they are justified in not keeping the other. But the fact that some one steals is no excuse for somebody else to kill. It is imagined by some that the second commandment forbids the making of anything whatever that is like something else. So they will either say that we cannot keep it, or else when one talks to them about the fourth commandment, for instance, they will evade the matter by pointing to some picture in your possession, and saying, “You do not keep the second commandment.”

Now we must allow God to interpret His own

law, and we must not accuse Him of inconsistency, or of violating it. Only a few days after this commandment was spoken, God called Moses up into the mountain, and gave him directions to make a sanctuary and vessels for service, and said to him: “Look that thou make them after their pattern, which was shown thee in the mount.” Ex. xxv. 40. And we are expressly told that these things were “patterns of things in the heavens.” Heb. ix. 23. Moreover by God’s express command the walls of the sanctuary were covered with pictures of cherubim, and there were two figures of cherubim, images made of beaten gold, upon the ark, which itself was a representation of God’s throne. This is sufficient to show us that the second commandment does not mean that we shall make no image of anything; indeed if some people’s interpretation of the commandment were correct, it would largely stop the manufacture of machinery, or implements of agriculture. No two could be made alike, because the second would be a likeness of the first. One could not have the buttons of his clothes the same pattern. But the commandment does not descend to such absurdities. The essence

of the commandment lies in the words, “You shall not bow down to them nor serve them.” Nothing is to be made with the idea of worshipping it.

The Roman Catholic Bible has, “Thou shalt not adore them,” instead of “You shall not bow down to them,” and then the people are taught that it is no sin to bow down before an image. We are told that they do not worship or adore these images, but that they use them as reminders of God or of saints whom they reverence. But the commandment says literally, according to the Hebrew, “You shall not do obeisance to them,” not bow down to nor recognize images in any way whatever as worthy of reverence. And it also forbids making any image to remind us of God; for every such thing must necessarily be infinitely below Him, and therefore must degrade the worshipper.

Changing the Truth into a Lie

This commandment grows naturally out of the first. That forbids having any God but one; this forbids the attempt to represent Him in any way

whatever. We are to worship Him in person, and not some substitute for Him, nor to attempt to worship Him through something else. In the fourth chapter of Deuteronomy we are told why this is so. “And the Lord spoke to you out of the midst of the fire. You heard the sound of the words, but saw no form; you only heard a voice.” “Take careful heed to yourselves, for you saw no form when the Lord spoke to you at Horeb out of the midst of the fire, lest you act corruptly and make for yourselves a carved image in the form of any figure: the likeness of male or female, the likeness of any animal that is on the earth or the likeness of any winged bird that flies in the air, the likeness of anything that creeps on the ground or the likeness of any fish that is in the water beneath the earth. And take heed, lest you lift your eyes to heaven, and when you see the sun, the moon, and the stars, all the host of heaven, you feel driven to worship them and serve them” (Deut. 4:12, 15–19).

“No man has seen God at any time,” therefore no man can make a representation of Him. We read that outside the Holy City, among the lost, is

“whoever loves and practices a lie” (Rev. 22:15). And whoever makes any image to represent God, makes a lie, because it is a misrepresentation of Him. The maker and the worshipper of a graven image has a lie in his right hand. (Isa. 44:9-20). In Romans 1:18-32 we read of the heathen who changed the truth of God into a lie. It is that the invisible things of God, namely His everlasting power and divinity, are seen in everything that He has made. But none of these things are a likeness of God. The truth was changed into a lie when men assumed that the things which reveal God were God Himself, or representations of Him.

There is a vast difference between Pantheism and God’s omnipresence, but the heathen did not discern it. “Although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Professing to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man—and birds and four-footed animals and creeping things” (Rom. 1:21–23). Here we see how necessary this

commandment is today and that it is as really broken in so-called Christian nations, as in the openly heathen ones. God looks upon the heart, and understands the thought afar off, and what one purposes to do is counted as the act itself. Nay, what one has not definitely purposed to do, and is not conscious that he will do, is counted as the act already done, if the thing that he has in his mind naturally leads to it. If we have in us the spirit which would result in open sin, that is sin, for “the devising of foolishness is sin” (Prov. 24:9).

Imagination and Image Making

Notice that before the heathen changed the truth of God into a lie by making images to represent Him, they “became futile in their thoughts,” trusting in themselves that they were wise. The work of the Spirit is “mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ” (2 Cor. 10:4, 5). Every one, therefore, who has vain thoughts,

who trusts in his own wisdom - which is foolishness in the sight of God - is essentially an idolater.

How few have thought of the connection between an image and imagination. Before a man makes a molten or graven image, he has the form of it in his mind. The evil does not consist merely in the image made, but in the imagination of it, “We know that an idol is nothing” (1 Cor. 8:4). And the reason why it is nothing is that it is the product of an empty thought. Therefore they who make them are like unto them, for he who thinks nothing, is nothing; and every thought that is not of God is a vain thought.

This is why those who profess themselves to be wise become fools. They could not think that they themselves were wise if they had the true knowledge of God. When men lose the knowledge of God, they really know nothing at all. Therefore the difference between those who make and bow down to images, and those who trust in the imagination of their own heart, is only one of

outward form and circumstance.

The truth is that God's power and presence are revealed in every created thing. The lie is that every creature is a god. Men assume that the force exerted through matter is inherent in the matter. From this it is but a natural step to conclude that the power manifest in man is inherent in him, and therefore that he himself is a god. This, instead of being elevating, is most degrading, as shown in the facts set forth in the first of Romans. Men become like that which they worship, so when they worship and serve the creature instead of the Creator, they inevitably fall to the level and even below the level of the lowest creature.

Our Only Safeguard is Seeing the Invisible

Is it not clear that this commandment forbids every vain thought, that it provides for a perfect mind, a perfect heart? Its message is identical with that to be given in the last days as a preparation for the revelation of the power and glory of God in the clouds of heaven at the second coming of Christ.

That message is, “Behold your God!” This commandment teaches us to behold God in all His manifestations; and whoever does this can never be so foolish as to attempt to make an image of Him.

But some one will say, “We cannot see Him.” Nevertheless we are to see Him, even though He is invisible. For it is the invisible things of God that are clearly seen in the things that He has made. (Rom. 1:20).

It was because men could not see God, that they made images to represent Him, and every one who does not see God in His works has in himself the essential elements of the transgression of the second commandment. “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God” (Matt. 5:8), not merely in the future, but now. “The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament shows His handiwork” (Ps. 19:1). God’s fingerprints are upon everything that He has made. Everywhere we see the traces of His hand. We see not simply where He has been working, but we see Him actively at work. One may say with Job: “Look, I

go forward, but He is not there, and backward, but I cannot perceive Him; when He works on the left hand, I cannot behold Him; when He turns to the right hand, I cannot see Him” (Job 23:8, 9). But He is there nevertheless, for He says, “Do I not fill heaven and earth?” (Jer. 23:24). And the sole business of our lives is to behold Him, and get acquainted with Him. This is the only safeguard against the violation of the second commandment.

Whoever gets acquainted with God, must be lost in wonder and adoration, and it is not possible for him to think of making something to represent Him, for he sees that He is an infinite God, with an infinite variety of manifestations. He learns that God is all, and he himself is nothing. As he looks at the revelation of God, he sees as it were God expanded before his eyes, and the more he sees of Him the more fully he realizes that there is yet infinitely more to see. Now since one must necessarily see the whole of a thing before he can make an image of it, it is plain that no one who sees God as revealed in His works can ever be so foolish as to think of making an image of Him.

In this commandment therefore we see that which is said of the whole law; it is “perfect, converting the soul;” it is, “pure, enlightening the eyes” (Ps. 19:7, 8). God’s “You shall,” or “You shall not,” is not an arbitrary decree which He issues, leaving the entire responsibility of performance with us, but is the statement of what will be the result if we allow Him to have His way with us. He has charged Himself with our salvation, and even as He is in Christ, reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses onto them, so He Himself becomes responsible for the obedience of every one who sees and acknowledges Him. “In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy paths” (Prov. 3:6).

Visiting the Iniquity

We have studied the part of the commandment which contains the direct precept, and must give a little attention to the last part, “For I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth

generations of those who hate Me, but showing mercy to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments.”

How many have ignorantly proclaimed the injustice of this, and have railed against God for punishing the children for the iniquities of the fathers. But God does not do this, and His commandment does not say that He does. God says of the wicked man, “If, however, he begets a son who sees all the sins which his father has done, and considers but does not do likewise; . . .he shall not die for the iniquity of his father; he shall surely live! “As for his father, because he cruelly oppressed, robbed his brother by violence, and did what is not good among his people, behold, he shall die for his iniquity. Yet you say, ‘Why should the son not bear the guilt of the father?’ Because the son has done what is lawful and right, and has kept all My statutes and observed them, he shall surely live. The soul who sins shall die. The son shall not bear the guilt of the father, nor the father bear the guilt of the son. The righteousness of the righteous shall be upon himself, and the

wickedness of the wicked shall be upon himself” (Ezek. 18:14–20).

The New Birth - the Way of Escape

God does not punish one person for another’s sins. Note what the commandment says: “Visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generations of those who hate Me.” “Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world,” yet death did not pass upon all men because of his sin, but “because all sinned” (Rom. 5:12).

There was one Man who did not sin, and who knew no sin, and death did not pass upon Him. He went into the grave a victor over it. This One was the Son of God’s love. He comes to all, and as many as receive Him, to them He gives power to become the sons of God, so that any and every child of Adam may be the Son of God’s love, even as Christ is. “For as by one man’s disobedience many were made sinners, so also by one Man’s obedience many will be made righteous” (Rom.

5:19). Even as the heaven is higher than the earth, and God's life and love are stronger than death, so the birth from above frees from all the consequences of being born from beneath. Though a man be born of the most degraded parents, he may through the Holy Spirit inherit all the goodness of God. By the exceeding great and precious promises of God, we are made partakers of the Divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust. (2 Peter 1:3, 4).

God's Way is Equal

We see therefore that God does not punish any person for the sins of another. He Himself most expressly declares that the son shall not bear the iniquity of the father. His grace provides for deliverance even in this present life from the physical infirmities that we have inherited from our first birth. The term "visiting the iniquity" evidently means punishment for sin, and this punishment for the sins of the fathers comes only upon those who commit the same sins. This is made very emphatic.

The question naturally arises, Why only to the third and fourth generation of them that hate Him? The answer is indicated in the statement itself. It is because sin is self-destructive, and haters of God in the full sense of the term, would entirely run out in three or four generations. When the line of demarcation is distinctly drawn between the righteous and the wicked, so that all on the one side are wholly devoted to God and filled with His Spirit, and all on the other side have sold themselves to Satan and have rejected God and His Spirit, the Lord will come to confer immortality upon the one class, and to destroy the other.

But this will be no arbitrary action. Those in the first class are not taken to heaven without seeing death, simply because they happen to be living when the Lord comes, but because they have in them the element of life, and if the Lord should not come they would continue living indefinitely, even in mortal flesh. The Lord, by conferring immortality upon them, and taking them to heaven, simply grants them the privilege of continuing their

life under infinitely better conditions.

On the other hand, those who have rejected the Lord have rejected life, and have chosen death, as He says: “All those who hate Me love death” (Prov. 8:36).

Sin is Self-destructive

The destruction of the wicked is not the cutting short of their probation. When all the wicked of all generations are brought to judgment, in the day of the Lord, no one will be lost who could possibly be saved, neither will any possible future generation be cut off; for so completely will the wicked have rejected the principles of life, that there could be no succeeding generation. If the Lord should reserve judgment, the wicked would destroy themselves by their vices and by violence. They would prey upon one another, and each one would be preyed upon by his own vices, until none were left.

So we see that the coming of the Lord is literally to the last generation of this earth.

Righteousness is everlasting, but sin is only for a time. There can be no such thing as sin continuing throughout eternity, and therefore no such thing as an immortal sinner. “Sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death” (James 1:15). Sin destroys itself in destroying the sinner. “The world passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever” (1 John 2:17). So God will not always chide, neither will He keep His anger forever, but His mercy is “from everlasting to everlasting.” Thousands of generations will, in the ages to come, be the recipients of His mercies, which are ever new.

God’s Jealousy Our Salvation

God is from everlasting to everlasting, and man becomes like that which he worships. We “beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory” (2 Cor. 3:18). God is a jealous God, but this by no means indicates that He has any selfish sensitiveness for His own dignity. His jealousy is our salvation. The Apostle Paul says: “For I am

jealous for you with godly jealousy. For I have betrothed you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ. But I fear, lest somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, so your minds may be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ” (2 Cor. 11:2, 3). God is, and there is no other. And we can be, only as we are in Him. Therefore He is jealous when He sees men given to idolatry, jealous for their sakes because He sees them going to nothing. For all the gods of the heathen are idols, literally “nothing.” When the work for which Christ has ascended into the heavens is accomplished, He will “fill all things” (Eph. 4:10). And then there will be no room in the universe for idols or their worshippers. They shall be as though they had not been.

A great mistake is made by most people, in reading this commandment, in that they think the jealousy to be limited to visiting iniquity. Read carefully, and you will see that His jealousy is manifested, not only in visiting iniquity, but also in showing mercy to thousands of generations of them that love Him and keep His commandments. How

foolish unbelief and fear see discouragement in that which is for our comfort and hope! Instead of cringing and cowering with dread at the thought that God is a jealous God, we should rather rejoice with exceeding great joy; for it assures us that He who is the Almighty will effectually guard us from the arts of the cunning foe, who seduces in order to destroy.

Because the words are so familiar through frequent repetition, that we often take no thought of their meaning, we need to have our attention specially called to the fact that this commandment speaks love and mercy. The law is love, and they who love God keep His commandments. “This is the love of God, that we keep His commandments.” Upon such His mercy is seen, because they do not shake it off. They find His mercy in their loving obedience to His commandments, for “in keeping them there is great reward” (Ps. 19:11).

Lost in the contemplation of the infinite greatness of God, His worshippers absorb Him

until they are completely swallowed up in Him, then whoever looks at them can see not them, but God who is all and in all. God is jealous for the glory and welfare of His people; He desires their minds to be clear, their souls purified, and their lives continued throughout eternity.

Love is the Fulfillment of the Law

In the last part of the Second Commandment, to the consideration of which we come this week in the series on “The Law of Life,” we are clearly shown that “love is the fulfillment of the law” (Rom. 13:10), for “those who love Me” “keep My commandments.” Yet how often this statement is made the excuse for disregarding one of the commandments, notably the Fourth.

“Love is the fulfillment of the law,” we are told by the one who intends to go on transgressing it, with as much confidence as though it read: Love is the transgressing, or disregarding, of the law. No; “love is the fulfillment of the law.” It is not a substitute for the keeping of the commandments,

but it manifests itself in obedience to the law; for ‘this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments.’ Therefore ‘he who says, ‘I know Him,’ and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him’ (1 John 2:4). ‘If you love Me,’ Jesus says, ‘keep My commandments.’”

“O God, of good the unfathomed sea!
Who would not give his heart to Thee?
Who would not love Thee with his might?
O Jesus, Lover of mankind,
Who would not his whole soul and mind,
With all his strength, to Thee unite?”

Chapter 3

The 3rd Law of Life

“You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain, for the Lord will not hold him guiltless who takes His name in vain” (Ex. 20:7).

We need not spend much time over the common idea of the violation of this commandment, that which is most obvious, and generally recognized. There are probably very few of those who read this who are guilty of what is ordinarily known as profane swearing. This is considered vulgar, and not in good taste, even by those who are not Christians. Most people think that they keep this commandment, even though they may realize that they are guilty in respect to some of the others. So the majority of what are called respectable people might conclude that they have no special need of this commandment. But it is here, in the midst of God’s law, and is one of the commandments that stand fast forever, and therefore it concerns every soul.

God Hears the Thought

The Word of God is “a discerner of the thought and intents of the heart” (Heb. 4:12). When we get that fact before us, there is probably not one of us that will not have to plead guilty to violating this commandment, both in spirit and in letter. We have already found that sin is not merely the thing done, but that within which impels the deed. The Lord looks not on the outward appearance, but on the heart, and on the thoughts and intents. “O Lord, You have searched me and known me, . . . You understand my thought afar off” (Ps. 139:1, 2). The faintest thought sounds as distinctly in the ears of God as the loudest speech. There is encouragement for us in this truth, if we know the Lord. He understands the unspoken longing just as well as the most fervent prayer is not a thing to be dreaded, but a glorious comfort, to know that God understands the innermost thought of the soul.

The Essence of Profanity

People who swear usually do so when they are irritated; thus they give vent to their passion. How many of us who do not use profane language have likewise been angry and irritated? We may not use the name of the Lord, but we have in us that which manifested itself in those who are accustomed to swearing. Now the outward manifestation is largely a matter of circumstance, training, and education. If we have been brought up in society where swearing is considered vulgar, and so have never fallen into the habit, or if we refrain from the use of profane words because the use of them might result in the loss of reputation, then our not swearing when we become angry is no virtue. Our angry feelings have every element of evil in them that there is in others who add the expression of profane words. There is a thing that has been by someone called “wood swearing,” as when an angry person gives vent to his feelings by stamping on the floor, striking the table, kicking a chair, or slamming the door. While this is not technically a violation of the commandment, it is such in reality, as all will be

able to see when they consider the breadth of this precept.

Substitute Words and Phrases Used to Swear

These are many words and expressions that are substituted for the actual name of deity, which are not more than one degree removed, if they are at all, from gross profanity. If you should, in reading this paper, come across the expression, “My goodness gracious!” or should hear a minister use it in his sermon, would you not be shocked? You would think it very much out of place, and that such a thing was unbecoming a preacher or teacher. But why should we say at home, or in private use words that would be out of place anywhere in the world? They are simply a substitute for the words which another man uses who has been brought up differently.

The Lord has proclaimed His name: “The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abounding in goodness and truth” (Ex. 34:6). These qualities are attributes of

God, so that to use the words, mercy, gracious, goodness, and the like, as mere expletives, is literally to take the name of the Lord in vain. Whether there is any difference in the degree between the sin of using these words, and taking the ordinarily recognized titles of deity, God alone can tell; but there certainly is none in kind, and whether a person uses one or the other is largely a matter of habit. “For every idle word men may speak, they will give account of it in the day of judgment” (Matt. 12:36). “But let your ‘Yes’ be ‘Yes,’ and your ‘No,’ ‘No.’ For whatever is more than these is from the evil one” (Matt. 5:37).

Thoughtless Habits

“But I say these things without thinking;” one says. Then think! God has given us minds, in order that we may think, and not do anything thoughtlessly. We should have a reason for everything we do, and for our habits. Though an act or word may come involuntarily, we should have a reason for the formation of the habit. Our habits must be formed by the Word and Spirit of

God. The Holy Spirit, having created us new creatures, must dwell within us, speaking through us. When this is the case, there will be no fear that we shall take the name of the Lord in vain. We all have need to pray, “Set a guard, O Lord, over my mouth; keep watch over the door of my lips” (Ps. 141:3).

Anybody can keep himself from the gross form of swearing, the obvious violation of the commandment, even though he have not the fear of God before his eyes. Almost every swearer knows that this is true, if he will but consider a moment, for all except those who are utterly abandoned abstain in certain society from the utterance of their common oaths. A young man once apologized to the writer for swearing at some provoking circumstance, saying that he could not help it. But he readily agreed that he could help it, when reminded that he would not have used the expression if ladies had been present. But, as we have seen, abstaining from what is considered as ordinary vulgar swearing, does not meet the requirement of this commandment.

Only the Spirit of God can enable us fully to keep the law, because the law is spiritual. The Spirit, however is abundantly able to keep us from every form of sin. So let nobody say of this or any other commandment, “I can’t keep it!” God has given us the power, for He has given us Himself. He made men to be kings, and though we have been slaves, He has through the Spirit proclaimed our emancipation, and forever delivered us from the necessity of saying, “I can’t.” “I can’t” means bondage. “Now the Lord is the Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty” (2 Cor. 3:17) and the Spirit is given to all. If we walk in the Spirit, we shall keep the commandments, and be at liberty.

All Sin is Blasphemy

This commandment forbids all unnecessary use of the Lord’s name, even in prayer. It shuts off “vain repetitions,” and “can’t” phrases, which people get in the habit of using without any thought of their meaning. It teaches us that we should use

the name of the Lord only with a definite purpose, and with a clear understanding of why we use it. That which one causes another to do, is counted as though he did it himself. Paul, addressing the Jews which were “instructed out of the law,” and made their boast in the law, yet who through breaking it dishonored God, said, “For “the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you,” as it is written” (Romans 2:17-24).

In like manner, after King David’s adultery and murder, the prophet Nathan said to him: “By this deed you have given great occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme” (2 Sam. 12:14). No man’s sin can end with himself. It is impossible for a man to sin, even in secret, without influencing somebody also against the Lord. So here again we see the exceeding breadth of the commandment, and how impossible it is to violate this third commandment without breaking the whole law. And, on the other hand, we see how every sin is a violation of the third commandment. So when we read: “You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain,” we way know that it is

equivalent to, “You shall do no evil.” Remember this when we come to speak of the still broader meaning of the commandment.

The Apostle James, speaking of those who dishonor their Maker by reproaching the poor, says: “Do not the rich oppress you and drag you into the courts? Do they not blaspheme that noble name by which you are called?” (James 2:6, 7). The church stands in the same relation to the Lord that the wife does to the husband. Christ is the Head of each individual Christian. The professor of Christianity takes His name, and should be absolutely one with Him, so that Christ’s life is the only life seen. Now if God is not given the supreme place in the life, and the individual’s sinful self is exhibited under the name of Christ, it is plainly seen that the Lord is dishonored. Neighbors look at the professor, and say that there is no power in Christianity. They blaspheme the name of God, saying that He is not able to keep those who trust in Him. Thus people who have never taken an oath in their lives are guilty of breaking the third commandment. Many professed Christians are

unconsciously taking the name of the Lord in vain.

A Gracious Promise

This thought naturally brings us to a wider and more glorious phase of the commandment than is usually comprehended. The third commandment is ordinarily regarded simply as a stern decree, as though God said, “Don’t you dare use My name lightly, or else I will punish you.” Men have robbed the commandment of all the love, all the joy, all the light, and peace, and comfort that it contains. It is even so with the whole law, which by many professed Christians is looked upon as a table of stern decrees, the justice of which they acknowledge, but which they regard as irksome.

The blessing of Moses shows that the law was given in love, and that it is an expression of the love of God. “The Lord came from Sinai, . . . From His right hand came a fiery law for them. Yes, He loves the people” (Deut. 33:2, 3). When received as it is given to us, in the hand of a Mediator, it conveys to us nothing of harshness, but everything

pure, tender, gentle, sweet, and easy, and that tends to lift up, strengthen, and bless. It is a blessed promise, that if we hear, we shall be preserved from taking the name of the Lord in vain.

Every commandment of God is a promise. God has pledged Himself that every believer will be kept from taking His name in vain,—that is, every believer will keep the whole law, doing nothing that can in any way dishonor God. “The Lord will not hold him guiltless who takes His name in vain.” This is a negative statement, the positive form of which would be, The Lord will hold him guiltless who does not take His name in vain. Is not that grand? The person who keeps the third commandment is counted guiltless before God. “Blessed is the man to whom the Lord shall not impute sin” (Rom. 4:8); and He does not impute sin to the man who does not take His name in vain.

Taking the Name

Think a moment of the word “take.” It means to lift up, to bear, not simply to utter. We are to

take the name of God, else there would be no force in the commandment not to take it in vain. But the blessedness of the commandment lies in the assurance that when we take it, it will not be in vain. It will accomplish something for us. It will make and keep us guiltless, for “the name of the Lord is a strong tower; the righteous run to it and are safe” (Prov. 18:10).

An illustration of this is given in the third and fourth chapters of Acts. In the third chapter we have the record of the healing of the lame man at the gate of the temple. He never had walked, but when Peter said to him, “In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk” (Acts 3:6), “he leaping up, stood and walked and entered the temple with them — walking, leaping, and praising God” (v. 8). When the multitude gathered round in amazement, Peter said: “The God of Abraham, Isaac, and of Jacob, the God of our fathers, glorified His Servant Jesus, . . . whom God raised from the dead, of which we are witnesses. And His name, through faith in His name, has made this man strong, whom you see and know. Yes, the

faith which comes through Him has given him this perfect soundness in the presence of you all” (vv. 13-16).

Then the next day, when the Apostles were brought before the Jewish Council, Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said unto them, “If we this day are judged for a good deed done to a helpless man, by what means he has been made well, let it be known to you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead, by Him this man stands here before you whole. . . . Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved” (Acts 4:9–12). This miracle gives us a vivid illustration of what it is to take the name of the Lord not in vain.

Salvation in the Name

There is salvation in that name. “You shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins” (Matt. 1:21). His name is what He

Himself is. Note the words used by Peter: “by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead, by Him this man stands here before you whole.” That is to say, that to stand in the name of Jesus is to stand in Jesus. The name is the person. God is the Saviour, and His name is in Christ.

Reality, Not Magic

The name of the Lord is not to be taken as a charm; it is not magic, but reality. When Paul was at Ephesus, wonderful miracles were wrought by him in the name of the Lord Jesus. “Then some of the itinerant Jewish exorcists took it upon themselves to call the name of the Lord Jesus over those who had evil spirits, saying, “We exorcise you by the Jesus whom Paul preaches.” Also there were seven sons of Sceva, a Jewish chief priest, who did so. And the evil spirit answered and said, “Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are you?” Then the man in whom the evil spirit was leaped on them, overpowered them, and prevailed against them, so that they fled out of that house naked and

wounded. This became known both to all Jews and Greeks dwelling in Ephesus; and fear fell on them all, and the name of the Lord Jesus was magnified” (Acts 19:13–17).

So we see that it is not some utterance of the name that is of value, but the recognition of the being and character of the Lord.

His Name is His Character

His name is His character, His personality, and cannot be separated from Himself. Names of men and things with us are mere matters of convenience and fancy; they mean nothing. And this is doubtless one reason why people do not better understand the force of “that glorious and fearful name, the Lord your God.” To take the name of God in reality is to take the life and experience the power of it. “And those who know Your name will put their trust in You; for You, Lord, have not forsaken those who seek You” (Ps. 9:10). God has never failed any person; we may go to Him in the name that is above every name, asking for His own

sake to take away our sins, and to cleanse us, and we shall never be disappointed. What a blessed promise! “You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain.” The Lord says to the one who trusts Him, “Because he has set his love upon Me, therefore I will deliver him; I will set him on high, because he has known My name. He shall call upon Me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble; I will deliver him and honor him. With long life I will satisfy him, and show him My salvation” (Ps. 91:14–16).

Baptized into the Name

The disciples of Jesus are baptized “in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” (Matt. 28:19). To be baptized in the name of the Lord is to be swallowed up in His life, so that one can say, “it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me” (Gal. 2:20).

Since the life is the life of Christ, it is perfectly

proper for the person to bear the name of Christ, just as the wife bears the name of her husband. We are joined by death to Christ in a bond “that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing” (Rom. 8:38, 39), can break. His name is our salvation. We are baptized into it, and it is the strong tower, into which we run and are safe. So again we rejoice in the assurance given in the third commandment, “You shall not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain.”

Praying in the Name

We are exhorted, “Whatsoever ye do, in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by Him.” Gal. 3:17. So we are to pray in His name, and the assurance is, “If ye shall ask anything in My name, I will do it.” There are many unconscious forgers at the bank of heaven. How many there are who in their prayers use the expressions, “in Jesus’ name,” and, “for Jesus’ sake,” without a thought of what

they mean. Thus they take the name in vain. They come with the name of the Lord without the Lord Himself.

When we truly bear the name of Jesus, we are sunk out of sight, for it is He who lives, and not we, and it is He in us asking that He may be delivered from the power of sin in our flesh. He is dwelling in our flesh, in order that He may cleanse us from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit. “In the days of His flesh, when He had offered up prayers and supplications, with vehement cries and tears to Him who was able to save Him from death”, He was heard. (Heb. 5:7). He was saved from death, in that He was saved from sin. He “suffered in the flesh” (1 Peter 4:1), “being tempted” (Heb. 2:18), but He suffered not for Himself. The Lord laid on Him the iniquity of us all, and it was the infirmities of our sinful flesh that oppressed His soul, He is still pleading in sinful flesh, presenting His life in our behalf, and longing to be relieved from the burden of sin with which we make Him serve.

How can a guilty sinner, already convicted of

law-breaking, appear before the Lord, in the presence of that law that sends forth thunder and lightning, and a storm of indignation upon the wicked? He dare not; but he need not, for it is not he, but Christ. Knowing and confessing that Christ is come in the flesh, the sinner comes with boldness to the throne of grace, for he comes in the name—in the person—of Jesus. If he truly believes in the name of Jesus, it is Christ using his tongue to utter the petition; and when he knows this, he can always make his requests with thanksgiving, no matter with how strong crying and tears his supplications be made; for Christ in the days of His flesh obtained deliverance from those very temptations to sin.

So when I use that name, I must claim all that the name comprehends. Christ never offered a petition in vain. He said, “Father, I thank You that You have heard Me. And I know that You always hear Me” (John 11:41–42). Whatever we ask in His name indeed, will be granted. God will clear and hold guiltless every soul who takes that name for all that it means. Such an one will not take it in

vain.

Stamped with the Name

“And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying: “Speak to Aaron and his sons, saying, ‘This is the way you shall bless the children of Israel. Say to them: “The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make His face shine upon you, and be gracious to you; the Lord lift up His countenance upon you, and give you peace.” ’“So they shall put My name on the children of Israel, and I will bless them” (Num. 6:22–27). The name of the Lord is mercy and grace and peace. This name put upon the soul, keeps it. The Lord says of the one who believes Him, and thus has the victory that has overcome the world, “I will write on him the name of My God and the name of the city of My God, the New Jerusalem, . . . And I will write on him My new name” (Rev. 3:12). So the trusting soul will be as safe as the New Jerusalem, and as God Himself. He says, “Then those who feared the Lord spoke to one another, and the Lord listened and heard them; so a book of remembrance was written before Him for

those who fear the Lord and who meditate on His name” (Mal. 3:16).

Those who trust in the name have the name written upon them, and that shows to whom they belong. This is a pledge of safety, for the Lord will keep His own. His name upon us shows that we are His property, and He will defend us with His life against all adversaries. The devil knows the name of the Lord, and trembles at its power. He knows that God has put a hedge about every soul who trusts in His name. Though Satan goes about like a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour, we are safe so long as we abide in the name of the Lord; and that name abides forever. “Those who trust in the Lord are like Mount Zion, which cannot be moved, but abides forever” (Ps. 125:1).

What a glorious promise, then, is the commandment that we shall never take the name of the Lord our God in vain!

Chapter 4

The 4th Law of Life

“Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord your God. In it you shall do no work: you, nor your son, nor your daughter, nor your male servant, nor your female servant, nor your cattle, nor your stranger who is within your gates. For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it” (Ex. 20:8–11).

The Origin of “Difficulties in Scripture Interpretation”

This commandment, like every other, is exceedingly broad, and we can never exhaust it. Yet, with all its breadth and depth, it is simple and easy to understand. Nevertheless, it is very much misunderstood, and many professed Christians

seem to find great difficulty in it. Because of the general perversion of this commandment, it is necessary to clear the ground of some misapprehensions, before we come to the consideration of the real teaching of it. The difficulties connected with this commandment, like those with any part of the Bible, are entirely in the minds of men, and not in the commandment itself. Perverted minds pervert the word. Whoever comes to the study of the Bible, totally free from prejudice or selfish motives, with a sincere desire that he may learn the will of God in order to do it, will never find any difficulty in it; for “If anyone wills to do His will, he shall know concerning the doctrine” (John 7:17).

All the difficulties of “interpretation” lie in this: People come to the Bible with more or less fixed opinions of what is right. They take it for granted that the common ideas and practices that they have received by tradition from their fathers must be right. But they find things in the Bible that do not sanction their course, and since their minds are not open to change, they feel it necessary to make the

Bible harmonize with their practice. Bible study is very difficult under such conditions.

Which Day?

Although the commandment states the case in the plainest language, there is a great deal of questioning as to which day is the Sabbath. Nothing could be more simple and direct than this: “the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord your God,” but the majority of professed Christians observe the first day, calling it the Sabbath, and hence arises one of the difficulties to which we have just referred. It is true that many observers of Sunday have not found any difficulty over it, because they suppose that it is the seventh day spoken of in the commandment. Their attention has never been called to the matter, or else they would see the fallacy of their supposition; for if you ask them why they observe Sunday, they will say that it is in honor of Christ’s resurrection, which they know took place on the first day of the week. “The Sabbath” is the day before the first day of the week. (See Luke 23:56; 24:1) Hence it is the

seventh day of the week.

It is very plain, therefore, that the fourth commandment, as given by the Lord from Mount Sinai, requires the observance of the seventh day of the week, and that the observance of the first day of the week by professed Christians is not authorized by it. There is no revised edition of the commandment, for God's Word is forever settled in heaven, and Christ said, "Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill. For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled" (Matt. 5:17, 18).

But some say, "It all depends on where you begin to count; if you begin to count with the second day, you make Sunday the seventh; or if you should begin with Wednesday, you would make the third day the seventh." The error of this statement should be apparent to every one. If a man has seven sons, you cannot make the first-born the seventh by any process of counting. Call them what

you please, the first-born is still the first son, and the last one born is the seventh. Calling black white does not make it white. Calling the first day the seventh does not make it the Sabbath; it still remains the first day, and one of “the six working days.” The same principle applies to the seventh day; no matter what men call it, or where they begin their count of days, it still remains the seventh day, which “is the Sabbath of the Lord your God.”

At the very time the law was spoken from Mount Sinai, when God said, “Remember the Sabbath day,” He was making it plain that the Sabbath is a definite day, and that it was not left to man to choose which day it should be, nor how it should be kept. The giving of the manna emphasized the sacredness of the day, and showed its definiteness. For forty years manna fell six days in the week; on the seventh day none fell, but the lack was made up by a double portion being given on the sixth day. While ordinarily the manna that fell one day could not be kept till the next day without spoiling, the extra portion given on the

sixth day was sweet and good for use on the seventh. Nobody could change the day.

Do We Know the Original Seventh Day?

But some tell us that the reckoning of days has been lost, and since we cannot know which is the original seventh day, one day is as likely to be right as another. Such objectors forget that the Word of God “lives and abides forever.” The commandment speaks to us as directly as it did to the Israelites gathered about Mount Sinai. It is not four thousand years old, but is new every day. We have no more ground for saying that we cannot tell which is the Sabbath day according to the commandment, than the Israelites had when they heard it spoken. God does not command impossibilities, and the fact that He still speaks to us in His commandment, requiring the observance of the seventh day, is evidence enough that it can be kept. But to take away every shade of doubt, and to show positively that the original Sabbath cannot possibly have been lost, we will briefly trace its history.

In the beginning God rested on the seventh day, and sanctified it (Gen. 2:3); and this is given in the commandment as the reason why we should observe it. God makes no mistakes, and never gets confused in His reckoning, so we may know that the Israelites in the desert had the identical seventh day upon which God rested. During all their history they were in direct communication with God by means of prophets, and the fact that they never lost their reckoning of the days is shown from the frequent reproofs God sent them for their violation of the Sabbath. Finally they were carried into captivity because of their transgression of the commandment; but God would not have punished them for disobedience if it had been impossible for them to know the truth. After their return to captivity they were very scrupulous in their observance of the Sabbath, at least outwardly. Then Christ came, God's Representative, and the Giver of the law. If the Jews had lost a reckoning, He would have set them right. But He recognized the day they were observing as the Sabbath day, and reproved them only because they made it a yoke of bondage, instead of the blessing that God designed

it to be.

Shortly after Christ's ascension the Jews were dispersed, and ever since they have been found in every part of the world. But they have remained faithful to the tradition of Sabbath keeping, and no matter how widely separated, they all still observe one and the same day. It is absolutely impossible that all should have lost the reckoning of days, and all made exactly the same mistake at the same time, so that nobody ever detected it. It is plain, therefore, that all that is required in order that one may know that he has the identical seventh day on which God rested, and in regular succession from the creation, is the ability to count to seven.

The Essence of the Commandment

Whoever reads the Bible with care will notice that there is never any suggestion of the possibility of doubt as to which day is the Sabbath. The whole burden of the Scripture is as to its nature, and the manner of its observance. "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy." We are not required to make

it holy; God himself did that in the beginning, to which the commandment refers us. When the heavens and the earth were finished, God “ended His work which He had done, and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done. Then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because in it He rested from all His work which God had created and made” (Gen. 2:2, 3). To sanctify is to make holy. The same word is used in the commandment as in Gen. 2:3. The idea prevails quite generally that men can keep any day holy, that they can make any day holy on which they choose to rest. This is a grave error. Only He who can create can make holy. For any man to claim that he can make a day holy, is to put himself in the place of God, claiming equal power with the Creator. When God says, “Hallow My Sabbaths,” He does not ask us to do what He has already done, but to recognize what He has done and conform to it.

It is not for the benefit of the Sabbath itself that we are required to keep it holy. “The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath” (Mark

2:27). Those who observe Sunday often bewail the little regard that is paid to it by the mass of people, saying, “We have no Sabbath;” and so they ask for laws to protect it. In these efforts to enforce Sunday observance by law, they disclaim any wish to make people religious by law, but say that they merely want protection for the day, as though people could injure a day by anything that they do on it. He who knows the true Sabbath day will never have any such thoughts about it. And our keeping it does not add any sacredness to the day, and our violating it does not make any difference in its sanctity. The Sabbath is not a fragile thing that must be kept in a case, lest it be broken to pieces by rough usage. It does not need to be protected: it itself is a protection for those who keep it. “His truth shall be your shield and buckler” (Ps. 91:4). It is never true that we have no Sabbath. If every man on earth violated the Sabbath, it would still remain the same holy day. You cannot abolish the Sabbath day, any more than you can abolish God.

Recall the text quoted in our study of the first commandment: Joshua 24:19: “You cannot serve

the Lord, for He is a holy God.” “God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth” (John 4:24). The law is spiritual (Rom. 7:14), and only those who are spiritual can keep it. John was keeping the Sabbath according to the commandment when he was “in the Spirit of the Lord’s day.” No one can serve God unless he is holy. We are to “worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness.” Does that shut anybody off from serving Him? No; this is the blessing of the Sabbath day: “I gave them My Sabbaths to be a sign between them and Me, that they might know that I am the Lord who sanctifies them” (Ezek. 20:12). God gives us the Sabbath, to make us know and remember that He has the power to make us holy, so that we can serve Him acceptably. God sanctifies man by His creative power, in order that they may keep the whole law. To keep the Sabbath holy, therefore, is the sum of all commandment keeping.

A New Creation

The Sabbath was instituted at the close of creation. It is the memorial of God’s creative

power. “The works of the Lord are great, studied by all who have pleasure in them. His work is honorable and glorious, and His righteousness endures forever. He has made His wonderful works to be remembered; the Lord is gracious and full of compassion” (Ps. 111:2–4). This last statement would be better rendered, “He has made a memorial for His wonderful works.” In the “song for the Sabbath day,” the Psalmist says, “I will triumph in the works of Your hands.” God alone works righteousness. “The Lord is righteous in all His ways, gracious in all His works” (Ps. 145:17). “For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them” (Eph. 2:10).

The Gospel is “the power of God to salvation,” and His everlasting power is seen in all the things that He has made. Therefore the power of the Gospel is to create, to make new. “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new. Now all things are of God” (2 Cor. 5:17, 18).

In Christ “we have redemption” because “by Him all things created” (Col. 1:14, 16). He is Redeemer because He is Creator, and redemption is creation. It is a complete and perfect work. Christ’s last words on the cross were, “It is finished!” The cross of Christ brings those who accept it into the condition in which man was at the close of the sixth day of creation, when God saw everything that He had made, “and behold it was very good.” Therefore, since the Sabbath is the mark or seal of a perfect new creation, it is the seal of the Gospel, the sign of the cross, the pledge of the complete redemption of all things.

Remember

“Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.” When shall we remember it? Many seem to think that the commandment merely requires them to remember it on Friday, so as to be able to get their work out of the way, and be ready to sit down and rest at the setting of the sun. This is well, but it is infinitely below what the commandment says. The word is absolute and unlimited. We are to

remember it all the time, everyday in the week. We are always to remember the sanctifying power which it reveals, in order that we may continually worship God “in the beauty of holiness,” “lifting up holy hands without wrath and doubting.” Knowing that only those who are holy can truly worship a holy God and keep a holy day, we must remember the Sabbath, which makes known God the sanctifier, and then when the Sabbath day comes to us, we shall be ready for it. It comes bringing a blessing; for God “blessed the seventh day.” It is frequently said, with a view to avoiding the force of the commandment, that we may have a blessing at any time. Some say, “I keep every day holy.” Now we not only may, but should, experience the blessing of God every day. But a blessing upon us, is not the same as a blessing upon the day. As we have already seen, we cannot keep any day holy except the one which God has made holy. Our motion or condition has no effect upon it; but the day is given to us to effect us. Do not forget that “the Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath.” No man’s holiness can impart holiness to any day; but the Sabbath was

given that we might partake of the holiness of God, and be kept holy every day. While God blesses us every day, there is a special blessing on the seventh day, even the blessing of the Sabbath, and this blessing assures to us all the blessings that we may have on any other day.

The Blessing of Eden

The Sabbath is a fragment of Eden that comes down to us untouched by the curse. It is the bridge by which men may pass from Eden lost to Eden restored, freed from the intervening curse. It is the rest to which Christ calls all who labor and are heavy laden. By it we become sharers of His burden, which is light, for He lays upon us only a “weight of glory.” So the Sabbath, when kept in the Spirit, brings to us the glory of that new creation when “the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy,” and is the pledge of the time when all the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord. Although Eden has been taken from the earth, that it might not suffer the effects of the curse, the reality of it is left

us in the Sabbath, that we may come back to the beginning, and find in the beginning the end, even “the salvation of your souls” (1 Peter 1:9). The reason why now, at this time, we have the Sabbath made clear as never before in this world’s history, is because Eden is about to be restored, and we must be made ready for the change. When Christ comes, He appears not as a stranger, but as one with whom we are well acquainted, and He will conduct us to Eden, not a strange country, but a familiar home. To this end God has given us the Sabbath, the essential part of Eden. There is to be a change now day by day, through the sanctifying power that the Sabbath makes us know and remember, so that at last when we get to Eden we shall not have to get used to our surroundings. Before the last day comes, we shall have drunk of the river of Eden, and eaten of the hidden manna. “They are abundantly satisfied with the fullness of Your house, And You give them drink from the river of Your pleasures,” or, literally, “the river of Your Eden” (Ps. 36:8).

Rest is Not a Burden

Sometimes when we talk about Sabbath-keeping, people will say, as though they were telling something new, “Oh, but keeping the Sabbath will not save us; we are saved by faith, not by works.” Exactly; and that is what the Sabbath teaches us. We keep the Sabbath, not in order to be saved, but because we are saved. Sabbath-keeping is rest in God, the assurance of His finished work. “This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He sent” (John 6:29). By believing, we receive the perfect works which God Himself has prepared for us to walk in. These works were finished from the foundation of the world. Therefore whoever receives them must find perfect rest, because when the work is done and well done, rest must necessarily follow. “There remains therefore a rest for the people of God” (Heb. 4:9). Note, it is the people of God who have the rest. “We who have believed do enter that rest” (v. 3), and they which do not believe, cannot rest. There can be no perfect Sabbath-keeping without perfect faith in God, which means perfect righteousness,

because we are justified by faith. So the Sabbath means pre-eminently justification by faith. Although there are many believers in Christ who observe Sunday, thinking it to be the Sabbath, it is nevertheless a fact that Sunday-keeping stands as a sign of attempted justification by works. It is the attempt of man to do the work which only God can do, namely, sanctify a day; for God never sanctified any day except the seventh day, so that all the sanctity Sunday has is what man has put upon it. He who can sanctify one thing can sanctify anything, because he must have the sanctifying power in himself. So the idea that man can make any day holy, involves the idea that he can make himself holy, that is, justify himself by his own works; its principle is that man has holiness in himself. Sunday-keeping is therefore the sign of the man of sin who “exalts himself against God.”

The Sabbath is rest; that is the meaning of the word. The word “Sabbath” is the untranslated Hebrew word for “rest.” It would be well if it had been translated into our language, instead of transferred. The word “Sabbath” conveys to the

Hebrew mind exactly what the English word “rest” does to ours. So we may read: “Remember the Rest day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is the Rest of the Lord your God.” How can anybody call this a burden? Rest is not a burden; to cease from labor is not wearisome; rest, absolute, perfect rest, the rest that cannot be disturbed by anything on earth, is the sum of all blessings. He who knows the Sabbath indeed can never count it a burden to keep it. Such an one will never say: “I could not make a living if I should keep the Sabbath,” because the Sabbath reveals God, in whom “we live, and move, and have our being.” It reveals Him who delivers from the power of darkness, and the curse and burdens and perplexities of this present evil world, and translates us into the kingdom of His dear Son, making known to us the power and the joy of the world to come. Then remember it, and keep it, that you may know the sweetness of rest in the bosom of the Father, and delight yourself in the Lord.

Chapter 5

The 5th Law of Life

“Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long upon the land which the Lord your God is giving you” (Ex. 20:12).

The Freedom of the Law

Let us first notice the last part of this commandment, the part which shows that the law is not limited in its application, but is for all eternity. “That your days may be long upon the land which the Lord your God is giving you.” Consider the circumstances of the giving of the law. The Lord had just led His people out of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. It is evident, then, that He was not leading them into bondage: therefore the law is not, as some suppose, a yoke of bondage, but is a gift to free men. The Lord brought the people out of bondage, that they might be free to keep His law. “He brought out His people with joy, His chosen with gladness. . . . That they might

observe His statutes and keep His laws” (Ps. 105:43, 45). “I will walk at liberty, for I seek Your precepts” (Ps. 119:45). So far is the law from being bondage, that only free men can keep it. The law is the truth (Ps. 119:142), and the truth makes free. (John 8:32).

The Land that the Lord Gives

What is the land spoken of in this commandment? The people to whom it was spoken well understood, or at least they had the means of understanding. They had been told, even before they left Egypt, that they were being delivered in fulfillment of God’s promise to Abraham hundreds of years before. God said: “I have also established My covenant with them, to give them the land of Canaan, the land of their pilgrimage, in which they were strangers. And I have also heard the groaning of the children of Israel whom the Egyptians keep in bondage, and I have remembered My covenant. Therefore say to the children of Israel: “I am the Lord; I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, I will rescue you from their

bondage, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great judgments. I will take you as My people, and I will be your God. Then you shall know that I am the Lord your God who brings you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians. And I will bring you into the land which I swore to give to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; and I will give it to you as a heritage: I am the Lord” (Ex. 6:4–8). When God made this promise to Abraham, He said, “And I will establish My covenant between Me and you and your descendants after you in their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and your descendants after you. Also I give to you and your descendants after you the land in which you are a stranger, all the land of Canaan, as an everlasting possession; and I will be their God” (Gen. 17:7–8). The land was promised to Abraham, as well as to his seed, and both he and they were to have it for an everlasting possession. Yet God “gave him no inheritance in it, not even enough to set his foot on” (Acts 7:5).

Abraham, however, died in the full assurance

of faith; for God had told him, in the making of the covenant, that he should die before he received the promised inheritance. (See Gen. 15:13-18). So Abraham well understood that the promised land could be received only through the resurrection of the dead, and would be bestowed when God should raise all those who sleep in Jesus. “For the promise that he would be the heir of the world was not to Abraham or to his seed through the law, but through the righteousness of faith” (Rom. 4:13).

The World to Come

The land, therefore, promised to Abraham was the earth, and that this is the land referred to in the commandment is shown in Eph. 6:2, 3, where the commandment is quoted thus: “Honor your father and mother,” which is the first commandment with promise: “that it may be well with you and you may live long on the earth.” The whole earth is given to each one who by his obedience shows himself to be a child of Abraham. But not the earth as it now is. Oh, no; God did not give this present evil world to man. It is most dishonoring to our

Father, when men quarrel over any portion of this earth as it now is, and claim it as theirs by right, by virtue of the gift of God.

Suppose a friend of yours, well known to be very wealthy, should promise to keep you in clothing, and should publish this promise as something of great worth and then should give you only some worn-out clothing, picked up at a pawn shop. You would not make a boast of this, and call attention to it as proof of big generosity. People who knew of the transaction would say: “I should think so rich a man as that could do better than to give you old clothes,” and you would feel ashamed for your acquaintance. So we should have too much respect for our heavenly Father, to tell anybody that it is this old, worn out earth that He has given to us for a possession. He is a King, and He gives like a king. Moreover we know that it is not this present evil world that is assured to us by the promise, for the land given is for an everlasting possession, and this world “is passing away, and the lust of it” (1 John 2:17). But we, “according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth

in which righteousness dwells” (2 Peter 3:13).

The land to which God was leading Israel from their bondage was His own dwelling-place, as we read in the song of Moses, when they stood on the shores of the Red Sea, freed from their adversaries. “You in Your mercy have led forth The people whom You have redeemed; You have guided them in Your strength To Your holy habitation” (Ex. 15:13). “You will bring them in and plant them In the mountain of Your inheritance, in the place, O Lord, which You have made for Your own dwelling, the sanctuary, O Lord, which Your hands have established.” “The Lord shall reign forever and ever” (vv. 17, 18). This will be fulfilled when “the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away” “And there shall be no more curse, but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and His servants shall serve Him.

They shall see His face, and His name shall be on their foreheads” (Rev. 21:3, 4; 22:3, 4).

But the Israelites did not believe, and so they could not enter into the promised land. (Heb. 3:18, 19). Nevertheless the promise, as we have already read, still holds good. Several hundred years after the time for the fulfillment of the promise which God had sworn to Abraham, but which the Israelites did not accept because of unbelief, God repeated the promise to David. At that time David was king over all Israel, and “the Lord had given him rest from all his enemies all around,” and the kingdom had reached the greatest measure of power and territory that it ever attained. Then God said to him: “Moreover I will appoint a place for My people Israel, and will plant them, that they may dwell in a place of their own and move no more; nor shall the sons of wickedness oppress them anymore, as previously” (2 Sam. 7:10).

It is evident, therefore, that any restoration of the Jews to their former possession in Palestine could not possibly be the fulfillment of God’s

promise. At the time of their greatest earthly prosperity, they were not in their own land, the land that God had promised to plant them in. When David transmitted the kingdom to Solomon, he said to the Lord, “We are are aliens and pilgrims before You, as were all our fathers; our days on earth are as a shadow, and without hope” (1 Chron. 29:15).

The true land of Canaan, the land where God will plant His people so that their days may be long in it, for they will have it for an everlasting possession, is the whole earth, where righteousness will dwell, and the children of wickedness will not afflict them. Canaan means submission, bowing the knee, and in that new earth all flesh will come before the God who hears prayer, and will worship Him in Spirit and in truth; for then “The Lord shall be King over all the earth. In that day it shall be—“The Lord is one,” and His name one” (Zech. 14:9).

The same truth is stated through the prophet Amos: “I will bring back the captives of My people Israel; They shall build the waste cities and inhabit

them; they shall plant vineyards and drink wine from them; they shall also make gardens and eat fruit from them. I will plant them in their land, and no longer shall they be pulled up from the land I have given them,” Says the Lord your God” (Amos 9:14, 15). Connect this with the eleventh and twelfth verses: “On that day I will raise up the tabernacle of David, which has fallen down, and repair its damages; I will raise up its ruins, and rebuild it as in the days of old; that they may possess the remnant of Edom, and all the Gentiles who are called by My name,” Says the Lord who does this thing” (vv. 11, 12).

Many years after the resurrection of Jesus, there was a meeting of Christians in Jerusalem; the apostles and elders were talking about the preaching of the Gospel, and after Peter had given his experience, James said: “Simon has declared how God at the first visited the Gentiles to take out of them a people for His name. And with this the words of the prophets agree, just as it is written: “After this I will return and will rebuild the tabernacle of David, which has fallen down; I will

rebuild its ruins, and I will set it up; so that the rest of mankind may seek the Lord, even all the Gentiles who are called by My name, says the Lord who does all these things.’ “Known to God from eternity are all His works” (Acts 15:14–18). Thus we see that the planting of Israel in their own land is to be accomplished through the preaching of the Gospel, which is the power of God to make new creatures, and to make the earth new for their habitation. Then will be manifest that which God knew “from the beginning of the world,” when the earth was new. This is the inheritance of every one who honors his father and his mother.

Long Life

“That your days may be long.” How long?—Forever; for the land which the Lord God gives us is to be ours for an everlasting possession. We are to be planted in the land, and pulled up no more. God says to the one whom He delivers, “With long life I will satisfy him” (Ps. 91:16). “He asked life from You, and You gave it to him—length of days forever and ever” (Ps. 21:4). How long would it

take to satisfy one with a life of fulness of joy? How long before one would say that he had had enough? In that perfect life which nothing can disturb, in that full day where “we shall ever feel the freshness of the morning, and ever be far from its close,” rich in love and happiness, one can never be tired. Nobody ever gets tired of life who lives with the Lord. Every day will be so full of satisfaction that nothing less than eternity of such blessedness can fully satisfy.

Each Commandment Contains Them All

This commandment shows very clearly how each one contains the whole. “Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long upon the land which the Lord your God is giving you” Whoever obeys this commandment is sure of everlasting life. The sure promise is that whoever honors his father and mother will be satisfied with length of days in the new earth. Does that mean that we can keep this, and ignore the others? Not by any means; all are equally important. It means that he who honors his father and mother is a doer

of all the commandments, even as we read, “He who loves another has fulfilled the law” (Rom. 13:8). Truly the commandment is tremendously broad.

The most obvious meaning of the commandment, the duty of children to their parents, need not occupy our attention at this time, since everybody recognizes and understands that. Everybody quotes the fifth commandment to impress upon children the necessity for obedience. Let us then dwell on that which is little thought of, on a phase of the commandment not usually recognized. In Ephesians 6:1-3, the fifth commandment is quoted, and in the fourth verse we are made to see the responsibility resting on parents in connection with it. We learn that it applies to them equally with their children. Parents are in the place of God to the children whom He gives them. For the first few years at least the whole responsibility rests on the parents to see that the children keep this as well as the other commandments. If the parent does his part well, the children will certainly do theirs, for God says,

speaking of the same promise that is referred to in the commandment, “The Redeemer will come to Zion, and to those who turn from transgression in Jacob,” says the Lord. “As for Me,” says the Lord, “this is My covenant with them: My Spirit who is upon you, and My words which I have put in your mouth, shall not depart from your mouth, nor from the mouth of your descendants, nor from the mouth of your descendants’ descendants,” says the Lord, “from this time and forevermore” (Isa. 59:20, 21). So then the faithful parent can say: “Behold I and the children whom Thou hast given me.” “Here am I and the children whom the Lord has given me!” (Isa. 8:18).

The Admonition of the Lord

In immediate connection with the commandment the Apostle says: “And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord” (Eph. 6:4). That is, nourish them, bring them up, cultivate them, train them as plants, in the way that they should go. The word “admonition” will

bear study. It is composed of two Greek words, one of which means mind, and the other, to place; admonition, therefore, means placing in the mind. One must know the admonition of the Lord in order to bring his children up in it. God does not admonish as most people do; unfortunately men very commonly judge of the Lord's admonition by their own, instead of learning from God how they ought to do. God's covenant is, "I will put My laws in their mind, and write them on their hearts" (Heb. 8:10). He sends His Spirit to place the law in the heart and life. This is the admonition, the "putting in mind" of the Lord. As God gently breathes the Spirit into the soul, thus placing there His righteous law, so the parent is to instill loyalty and obedience into the mind of the child, for the parent stands in the place of God, and in its earliest infancy must reveal to it all that it knows of God.

Some Illustrations

Two cases will show how very much parents are concerned in this commandment. God said of Abraham, "For I have known him, in order that he

may command his children and his household after him, that they keep the way of the Lord, to do righteousness and justice, that the Lord may bring to Abraham what He has spoken to him” (Gen. 18:19). God was made known to Abraham, in order that Abraham might make Him known to his children. The result of this was that God could bring upon Abraham that which He had spoken of him. Suppose that Abraham had not known the law of life, and had not trained his household according to it. What then?—He himself would have lost the promise.

So we see that parents are concerned in this commandment as much as children possibly can be. If they should not do their duty, there would be no possession of the promised land. But the parents are not to rule by arbitrary authority, because they are bigger and stronger, because they support the children, or because they wish their dignity and authority to be respected. No; the parent is to rule even as God does, who gives His law by His Spirit in the hand of a Mediator, gently establishing a bond of union by which the law may flow from

Him to us.

The case of Eli presents a view of the opposite course, and taken in connection with the case of Abraham, shows that, if we can make any comparison, it is a more fearful thing for parents to have disobedient children, than for the children to be disobedient. God expects the children of His people to be His also. Eli was God's high priest, but he had wicked sons; He knew of their wickedness, and remonstrated with them, saying, "Why do you do such things? For I hear of your evil dealings from all the people. No, my sons! For it is not a good report that I hear. You make the Lord's people transgress" (1 Sam. 2:23–24). But his sons paid no heed to this mild protest, and the Lord said to Samuel: "I will perform against Eli all that I have spoken concerning his house, from beginning to end. For I have told him that I will judge his house forever for the iniquity which he knows, because his sons made themselves vile, and he did not restrain them" (1 Sam. 3:12, 13). Eli did not learn from the Lord how to govern, and he lost much by it. Abraham had learned the lesson from

God, and it was eternal gain to him.

There is another phase of the commandment that is scarcely ever thought of. "Honor your father and your mother." To whom does this speak? There is no limit; it speaks to everyone who has or has ever had a father and a mother, that is it speaks to all mankind without exception. This commandment is not limited to children; it speaks to the man of fourscore as well as to the child of four. Someone may say: "I have no father or mother; they are dead; how can I honor them?" Just the same as though they were alive; indeed it is often the case that people do not learn to honor their parents until after they are dead. A person never in his life gets into a condition where this commandment does not apply to him. He may never have known father or mother; they may have died the day he was born. Yet the commandment still speaks to him, "Honor your father and your mother."

The Commandment is Universal

Still more: it makes no difference about the character of the father or mother; they may have been the most depraved characters, nevertheless the commandment speaks: “Honor your father and your mother.” It is not the child simply, that is the index of the parent, but so long as a person lives, his character reflects upon his ancestry. Even though a man’s parents have not done their duty by him, have neglected or ill-treated him, and have trained him in habits of sin rather than of righteousness, still his duty is to honor them. How? you will ask; must he implicitly obey and always follow their evil teachings? Not by any means. That would not be honoring them. He must honor them by his upright life.

Whenever a man lives an honorable life, the name which he bears is honored, and his father is thus honored through him. People who have not known his parents will naturally conclude that he must have come from a good stock; and even though they have known them, and have

considered them to be worthless characters, yet seeing the right character developed in the son, they will think that there must have been some good in them, after all. Of course, the good all comes from the Lord, yet God Himself desires that the parents should share in the honor, even as He would have them co-operate with Him in the development of right characters in their children. No man can live a base, ignoble life without bringing dishonor upon his parents; but if he himself yields to the redeeming grace of God, he redeems to some extent, at least among men, the character of his parents.

The Universal Father

So this commandment simply says to every soul on earth, Be good: do that which is right and true; honor God, the Universal Father, the One from whom all fatherhood comes. We are His offspring, and He is the One who is to be honored above all in the honoring of our parents, and nothing that is dishonoring to God can possibly be honoring to the parent. "When my father and my

mother forsake me, then the Lord will take care of me” (Ps. 27:10). Our duty to our parents when they are living, is simply our duty to God through them, and if they are dead, the relationship still continues the same to God. “As one whom his mother comforts, So I will comfort you” (Isa. 66:13). God Himself is the fulness and reality of all human relationships.

We see that this commandment is exceeding broad; it not only embraces the whole relation of children to parents and of parents to children but the whole of every person’s life. If there be any difference, it applies to the parent more emphatically than to the child, for the parents have a duty first, in order that the child may honor them in obedience to this commandment. God who gives to us the promise of the eternal inheritance, expects us to live in this world in a way becoming the inheritance. “Strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, for all patience and longsuffering with joy; giving thanks to the Father who has qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light. He has

delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love” (Col. 1:11–13). He expects us by the grace He has given us to live in this world as we shall continue to live in the world to come.

We are to live now as in Eden. That does not mean that there should be no family and social life; quite the contrary, since the family began in Eden. It matters not that we are in a sin-cursed earth, with sinful flesh. The Lord Jesus, in whom was no sin, and who knew no sin, was “born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law” (Gal. 4:4, 5), and He has redeemed us from the curse of the law. “Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are children of promise” (Gal. 4:28). The promise referred to in the fifth commandment, which is the reward for obedience to it, is the power by which we obey it; for the exceeding great and precious promises, “that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust” (2 Peter 1:4). Being made partakers of the Divine nature, we honor the Father in heaven, and

so all earthly relations. The possibility of this perfect childhood is shown not alone in the case of Jesus; John the Baptist, filled with the Holy Spirit from his mother's womb; Samuel, asked of the Lord, and was devoted to His service from his birth; Jeremiah, ordained of God to be a prophet before he was born,—all these cases show us what is possible, and what God would have for every child. It is the birthright of every child born into the earth, the right purchased for us by Christ and made possible for everyone in Him. Every child born with less has been deprived of his due, and has received an injury.

These things recognized would prevent any parent from delaying the training of his child. Most parents seem to think that the child is not capable of receiving training before it is four or five years old. It is marvelous how much an infant in arms can understand. Think of the breadth of mind that Jesus, the model child, had at twelve years of age, and you will realize that His mind must have begun to develop at a very early period. Someone will ask, how soon a child should be corrected. The

answer is, just as soon as it is old enough to show self-will. “But that would be cruel!” No; not cruelty, but kindness. The admonition must be suited to the age. The younger the child, the more easily is it trained in the right way. The cruelty comes in only in neglecting this training until the child has reached an age when severe measures become necessary, and when even these will not avail.

“Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it” (Prov. 22:6). This is an unqualified promise. If a person goes astray, we may be sure he has not had the proper training in his childhood. God expects that the child of every Christian shall grow up His own child. He is to be trained to recognize authority. Having learned the principles of obedience he will obey God. But if we have failed in this, we need not despair. God enables us to redeem the past; He forgives sins of ignorance and unbelief and neglect, and saves that which has been lost. Although we have been deprived of our birth-right, we need not be despondent, for by the new birth all the

disabilities of the first birth are cancelled. We are heirs of God, who undertakes our bringing up, breathes His life and character into us, and superintends our education. Let us then honor Him by our faith in His promises, and He will honor us with His salvation.

Chapter 6

The 6th Law of Life

“You shall not murder” (Ex. 20:13).

It is very likely that most of those who read this would be inclined to say: “All these things I have kept from my youth” (Luke 18:21). The number of people who with malice or by force take the life of any fellow-creatures is comparatively small, and therefore there is undoubtedly a feeling among most people that this commandment does not specially concern them. They acknowledge, of course, that it is right, but do not think that they have ever fallen under its condemnation; they are not conscious of ever having had even a desire to kill anybody, and so they assume that so far as they are concerned this commandment need never have been given. But again we must be reminded of the fact that the commandment is exceedingly broad, and that this one is no less broad than the ones before it. The commandment is spoken to all and is necessary for all, because God never speaks in

vain. The moment we use a synonym for the word “kill,” we begin to see a little of the breadth of the commandment, “You shall not murder.” This expression is so common that we scarcely give it a thought; but we may say, “you shall not take life,” which is the same thing in different words, and we at once get a broader view. How much is contained in it will appear more as we proceed.

The Root of Murder

Of Christ it was prophesied that “He will exalt the law and make it honorable” (Isa. 42:21). In the fifth chapter of Matthew we see the law exalted by His teachings. He said: “You have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not murder, and whoever murders will be in danger of the judgment.’ But I say to you that whoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment” (Matt. 5:21, 22). This statement is absolute: every one who is angry with his brother is guilty of murder. Jesus is not disparaging the teaching of old time; He Himself is the Beginning, and He came to make plain that which was taught

from the beginning. He did not mean that the commandment, “You shall not murder,” was incomplete, and that He was giving something better and greater, but He showed how comprehensiveness it is,—that the words, “You shall not murder,” also mean, “you shall not be angry.” “Love is the fulfillment of the law,” and love “is not provoked” (1 Cor. 13:5).

God does not see as men see; man looks on the outward appearance, but God looks on the heart. In every case the sin is not the thing actually done, which man can see, so much as it is the condition in the man that led him to do it. So long as the root from which murder grows is in the heart, the man is counted as a murderer. Men naturally classify sins into different grades, and in the history of the apostate church men have been required to do penance according to the recognized degree of guilt. Some sins were classed as venial, and others as mortal. For some sins the payment of a small sum would provide satisfaction, while others could be expiated only by a vast amount of treasure or works. This is simply the religion of human nature.

Some sins are more unpopular than others; for some sins the sinner is ostracized, while others do not affect one's standing in society, but may even give one admission into what is considered the "best society." But there is no evidence in the Scriptures that the Lord grades sin. We have no reason to suppose that He recognizes the distinction made by man, of "murder in the first degree," or "second degree." "Sin is the transgression of the law," and "the wages of sin is death." That comprehends the whole matter.

In this we are not belittling the guilt of murder, but showing where the sin lies. He who has taken the life of another has done an awful thing, yet he is not necessary more guilty than one who has done something not so looked upon by the world. Let us consider the matter of anger: Who has not been angry? Indeed it is often thought that a display of anger is a mark of spirit, and of strength of character, and that he who cannot be provoked to anger is a milksop [1], and lacking in ambition. But anger is really brief madness, and to give way to it,

the same as to give way to any other passion, is a mark of weakness, and not of strength. How many murders have resulted from quarrels arising over some trifle. Two friends get into a dispute, they are both quick-tempered, and one takes offense at something said by the other; retort is given, the men both lose control of them selves, and blows are exchanged. In their temporary madness a severe blow is struck, and one of them is killed. Then comes the awakening; the man would never have done such a thing if he had known what he was doing, but he was so angry that he did not know what he was about. How many times has this been given as an excuse for something that one has done; and it is true, for a person in this condition is not waster of himself.

In one sense the murder committed under such conditions is an accident; it certainly was not intentional. Yet the man is a murderer, nevertheless. The guilt lies not in the blow that was struck in a moment of unconsciousness, but in that disposition which made the blow possible. How many there are who have been saved from the

gallows only by accident. For let every person who has ever been so angry that he has, even for a moment, lost control of himself, remember this: that in that moment he might have taken a life, and the fact that he might have done so, and that it was only accident or the grace of God that preserved him from the actual deed, shows that he was really guilty of the possible murder. This terrible thought should be taken to heart, and serve as an effectual warning against giving way to passion.

Take the case of the first murder ever committed. We have the secret of it given here: “For this is the message that you heard from the beginning, that we should love one another, not as Cain who was of the wicked one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his works were evil and his brother’s righteous” (1 John 3:11, 12). You know the story. Cain and Abel each brought an offering to the Lord; Abel’s was accepted, Cain’s was rejected. What evil quality is it that is aroused when one finds another preferred before him?—It is jealousy. Cain killed Abel because he was jealous of him. Every jealous

feeling is the seed of a murder. No, more than this; as with anger, so with jealousy, it does not simply lead to murder, but it is murder. Every one who feels hurt because somebody else is honored and he is passed by; every one who feels sour or morose because he has not been treated with the consideration that he thinks he is due, has violated the commandment which says, “You shall not murder.”

This plainly appears from the text last quoted, taken in connection with the discussion of love. “Love does no harm to a neighbor” (Rom. 13:10). Love “does not seek its own.” Love prefers another in honor; but where love is not, there is murder. Read again the verses quoted from 1 John 3:11, 12: the commandment is “that we should love one another, not as Cain who was of the wicked one and murdered his brother.” Here we are told, not what love is, but what it is not. Love is the opposite of the spirit that Cain manifested. Whoever does not obey the law of love, is classed with Cain, who was of that wicked one and murdered his brother.

This is further shown in the case of Joseph and his brothers: Joseph had received special marks of favor from his father, and because of his high character had been taken more fully into his confidence than his brethren. When they saw him coming to them on an errand of kindness, they said: “Look, this dreamer is coming! Come therefore, let us now kill him” (Gen. 37:19, 20). They did not actually take his life, but were turned aside from it by Reuben, only as a matter of expediency. In effect, they killed him. They sold him into Egypt, only because they thought that they would get rid of him as effectively as by shedding his blood. This was the natural working of envy, for we read: “And the patriarchs, becoming envious, sold Joseph into Egypt” (Acts 7:9). Envy, therefore, which is the sister of jealousy, is also murder. Every one who envies another, because of his goodness or any good fortune, has transgressed the commandment, “You shall not murder.”

Where do wars come from?

Let us take another development of the

violation of this commandment. The Scripture asks: “Where do wars and fights come from among you?” and the answer is returned: “Do they not come from your desires for pleasure that war in your members?” Then the Word continues, “You lust and do not have. You murder and covet and cannot obtain. You fight and war. Yet you do not have because you do not ask” (James 4:1, 2). Nothing is more common than war and the war spirit. War is not generally looked upon with abhorrence, even by most professed Christians, but in many cases as a thing to be gloried in. In every war, from every paper and from almost every pulpit the word that is foremost whenever there is any provocation on the part of any other nation, is war. If war is not advocated or longed for, its possibility is at least considered, and yet the people who talk and think like this would be shocked at the charge that they are breaking the sixth commandment. But of what does war consist?—Of fighting and killing; and killing is forbidden by the sixth commandment. There certainly can be no war with nobody killed, and no intent to kill. “Love is the fulfillment of the law,” and “love does not

harm a neighbor.” Jesus said, “Love your enemies,” yet love cannot possibly be consistent with killing them.

War comes from the “desires for pleasure that war in” the members of men. A war in which thousands are killed comes from precisely the same source as the murder of a single individual, and is simply the one case multiplied. One man is envious of another’s good fortune, is jealous because the other has attained distinction that he has not, he desires some property that one has; he is angry with him because of disrespectful or contemptuous language, and so he kills him. Even so it is with nations: they go to war because one has used undiplomatic language, and will not withdraw it. One is getting the advantage of another in the matter of commerce; one is acquiring territory which the other wants or claims as its own by right. So they go to war, thousands are killed, and the world and the church unite to praise the glorious deeds that have been done. Meanwhile, the man who killed a single person, has been hanged. All the time the commandment says, “You shall not

murder;” and no amount of casuistry or reasoning can reconcile war with this commandment since it is wrong to kill a single man, it cannot be right to kill a thousand.

What is Involved in Self-Defense

“But” some will say, “we are never the aggressors; we do not fight except in self-defense, to maintain our rights, and we do not believe in fighting under any other conditions.” It seems to be universally accepted that people must defend themselves and their rights, although we have the assurance that “the Lord will maintain the cause of the afflicted, and justice for the poor” (Ps. 140:12), and He says, “Vengeance is Mine, I will repay” (Heb. 10:30). So whoever thinks that he must defend himself, or avenge his own wrongs, takes upon himself work that belongs to God alone, and shows that he thinks that he is better able to manage his own case than the Lord is.

Let us see what is written in the law: Jesus said, “You have heard that it was said, ‘An eye for an

eye and a tooth for a tooth.’ But I tell you not to resist an evil person. But whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also” (Matt. 5:38–39). Whoever looks up this quotation will find that it is not addressed to individuals, but was a rule for the direction of the judges in the cases that came before them. The whole law, of which this was a part, was given to the Israelites only because of their unbelief, and because they rejected God from being their sole King and Judge. In this, as in many other things, we must believe that “from the beginning it was not so,” and Christ’s work is always to bring men back to the beginning, to Himself. The words of Christ, “I tell you not to resist an evil person,” taken in this connection, show that His followers are not to have recourse even to the course of law. This is especially what Christ has reference to, as the next verse shows: “If anyone wants to sue you and take away your tunic, let him have your cloak also” (v. 40). How much less, then, should one take the initiative, and sue another at the law. And since even “legal” measures in self-defense are forbidden by the Gospel, which is the revelation of the

commandment, how plain then that no one has the right to take things into his own hands or to do anything in self-defense.

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

Someone is sure to be ready with the question, “What would you do in case a robber should assault you, demanding your money or your Life”?

We need never borrow trouble from the future, or speculate how the precepts of Christ can be obeyed, under various conditions. If we believe, grace will be given for the time of need. In the supposed case, it seems quite evident that the course of wisdom would be to give up the money and save the life. But suppose one resists in such a case, let us make a comparison between him and the robber. If one objects to parting with his money, the robber may kill him and take it. In that case the robber would be rightly called a murderer. It is a sordid murder; he has taken his victim's life for a paltry sum of money. But suppose the robber does not succeed in the object; suppose his intended victim is the quicker and stronger of the two and kills him instead; is he not also a murderer?—he has killed a man merely for a sum of money. The robber would kill him to get it, he kills the robber to save it. In either case it would be a life taken for money. Who can say that one is less guilty than the other? Self-defense does not seem so attractive when put in this form, does it?

But the objector may say that it is not for

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

The whole question of self-defense, or of standing for one's rights, is settled by the statement that love "does not seek its own" (1 Cor. 13:5). The defending of one's rights shows the absence of love; where love is not, there is hatred, and hatred is murder, so we cannot avoid the conclusion that self-defense is also murder. The commandment, "You shall not murder," forbids violence of any form or degree. No matter how many objections

may arise, the fact is that the commandment is easy to keep when the love of God is in the heart: “For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome” (1 John 5:3). It is impossible to keep the law, only when the law of God is not given a place in the heart. There is no depth to the cruelty which human nature is capable of when it is not influenced by the law or love of God; and there is no measure to the righteousness that is possible when the love of God is given full sway.

A Deadly Weapon

There are various kinds of weapons with which murder is committed. One may use a knife, or poison, and among poisons there are some that are worse than others. The tongue is declared to be “an unruly evil, full of deadly poison” (James 3:8). Of natural, unregenerate man it is said, “he poison of asps is under their lips” (Ps. 140:3). Who shall say that it is less sinful to poison a man with the tongue than to poison him with arsenic? The Lord says: “You shall not go about as a talebearer among your

people; nor shall you take a stand against the life of your neighbor” (Lev. 19:16). A man’s whole life may be poisoned by a few and ill-advised words. It is not merely the one talked about who is injured, but the one to whom the evil tale is repeated may be destroyed eternally, through its influence. And the evil is not lessened, but it is even aggravated, by the fact that the evil thing that is reported is true. We need, then, most earnestly to pray: “Set a guard, O Lord, over my mouth; keep watch over the door of my lips” (Ps. 141:3).

The Commandment is Positive

The law says further, “You shall not hate your brother in your heart. You shall surely rebuke your neighbor, and not bear sin because of him” (Lev. 19:17). Hatred is murder; the absence of love is hatred; and we here see that whoever knowingly allows his neighbor to remain in sin without seeking to save him does not love him. It is counted as hatred, and he is therefore his murderer. “By this we know love, because He laid down His life for us. And we also ought to lay down our lives

for the brethren” (1 John 3:16). “The brethren” here referred to are not merely those in immediate fellowship with us, but all mankind; for Christ, who gave His life to save the world, said: “I will declare Your name to My brethren” (Ps. 22:22), meaning those who were hateful, and hating God and one another. And He came as the living embodiment of the law, and His mission was to save life. In this we see that the law is not negative, but positive; it does not require merely that we should refrain from taking life; but demands that we should do everything possible to save it. “No murderer has eternal life abiding in him” (1 John 3:15). This teaches that it is only by the recognition of eternal life, that we keep from the violation of the commandment. That life abiding in us makes us know the sacredness of life, so that when we see our brother going in a way that leads to death, we are constrained to give ourselves to save him.

The Sacredness of Life

The sacredness of the commandment is seen when we realize that life is the gift of God,—not

the gift of something apart from Him, but the gift of Himself. Life is as sacred as God, because He is our life. Therefore he who would destroy life would if it were possible destroy God. This is but another statement of the Scripture truth that “He who sins is of the devil” (1 John 3:8), who “was a murderer from the beginning” (John 8:44). He set himself in opposition to God, and although he did not, since he could not, slay the Lord, he was nevertheless a murderer from the beginning, for he had murder in his heart; and the fact was demonstrated when he instigated the princes of this world to kill the Prince of life.

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

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

What a sacred responsibility rests upon every one to lay hold on eternal life by faith, by making use of every agency which God has given for the sustenance of life, and by denying every sinful lust that wars against the soul,—the life. To keep one's body and health is as sacred a duty as to preserve the soul from sin. The man who injures the body of another is justly considered a criminal. But his own body is just as sacred as that of other's, and is really not his own. "Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own?" (1 Cor. 6:19) "If anyone defiles the temple of God, God will destroy him" (1 Cor. 3:16). Therefore to injure one's own body willfully or through neglect is to defile the temple of God, and therefore is a sin against God.

Partners with God

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

If we saw nothing but this side of the question, we might well exclaim, "Who then can be saved?" We have all "sinned and come short of the glory of God." But there is hope. "If You, Lord, should mark iniquities, O Lord, who could stand? But

there is forgiveness with You, that You may be feared” (Ps. 130:3, 4). And here we are comforted with the knowledge that all the commandments of God are promises, and the greater the commandment, the more exceedingly great and precious the promise which it contains,—the promise by which we are made partakers of the divine nature “having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust” (2 Peter 1:4). Precious promise! “You shall not murder.” No longer is it a hard enactment, purely negative in its force, but it is the blessed assurance that God in His infinite mercy, and by His wondrous grace continues the stream of life flowing through us so freely that it will restore that which was lost, and keep us from every way of death. It is the assurance of redemption from every evil habit, of salvation from every vice that tends to the destruction of soul and body. Not only so, but that we shall be dispensers of that stream which causes everything to live wherever it goes. Let us then fight the good fight of faith, and lay hold on eternal life.

Note :

1. Milksop: a person who is indecisive and lacks courage.

Chapter 7

The 7th Law of Life

“You shall not commit adultery” (Ex. 20:14).

The Order of the Commandments

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

The first reveals God in His essential attribute as the Saviour; “I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. You shall have no other gods before Me” (Ex. 20:1–3). He is the only God, because He is the only One who can save. “I, even

I, am the Lord, and besides Me there is no savior” (Isa. 43:11).

The second naturally grows out of this, for “they have no knowledge, who carry the wood of their carved image, and pray to a god that cannot save” (Isa. 45:20).

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

The fourth commandment reveals the name, “for Your wondrous works declare that Your name is near” (Ps. 75:1). It shows the Lord at work and at rest; and when we see His works understandingly, we learn His ways, and enter into His rest.

From the contemplation of God as Creator, we are now brought to consider Him as Father. He is the Universal Father, and human parenthood is the

revelation of God working through the flesh. From the honor due to our parents, we are to learn the reverence due to God, the Supreme Father of all.

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

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

The Beginning of Evil

It is not necessary for us to dwell upon the grosser forms of the violation of this commandment; they are generally regarded not only as sin, but as crimes, as offenses against respectability. Whether the gross violation of this commandment is worse than the violation of the other commandments God alone knows; but one thing is sure, and that is that the “commandment is exceedingly broad.” People generally regard it as prohibiting the act of sin, whereas it deals specially with the beginning of it.

Christ’s words in the sermon on the mount, show the spirituality of the commandment: “You have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not commit adultery.’ But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart” (Matt. 5:27, 28). Christ was not adding anything to the commandment which He Himself had given; He was revealing the breadth and depth of it. His language is unqualified and unlimited. The

commandment is violated by an impure thought or look, not simply upon a woman who is not one's wife, but upon any women whatsoever. The lustful thought is adultery. From the commandment as magnified by Christ's statement of it, we see that adultery may exist even within the marriage relation, for that relation does not sanctify lustful thought and impure action.

The Institution of Marriage

God Himself instituted marriage in the beginning. When God made man, He made him male and female, and gave them dominion, saying, "Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it" (Gen. 1:28). This was even before the Sabbath was given. On the sixth day, God created man, the last of all His works. The animals were all brought before him for him to name, but among them he found none that could be a companion for him. So God took from his side a rib, which He built into a woman, and brought to him, and, recognizing his counterpart, "And Adam said: "This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called

Woman, because she was taken out of Man.” Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh” (Gen. 2:23, 24).

It was after the union of the man and the woman had been blessed by God, and the command to be fruitful had been given, that “God saw everything that He had made, and indeed it was very good. So the evening and the morning were the sixth day” (Gen. 1:31).

Then came the Sabbath, the seventh day, which God blessed for man’s good. These two institutions, marriage and the Sabbath, come from Eden, and belong to Eden. In marriage, even as in the Sabbath, we have that which, rightly understood, brings us closer to God in His working than anything else.

True marriage brings men into close connection with the Lord, making them partners with Him in His work. In it we have the revelation of the mystery of Christ in His union with the church.

The Apostle Paul, after quoting the words found in the second chapter of Genesis, “the two shall become one flesh,” adds, “this is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church” (Eph. 5:31, 32). And he says that husbands should love their wives, as Christ also loved the church, and that the husband should nourish and cherish the wife even as the Lord the church. “For we are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones” (v. 30). Marriage is designed to teach us of Christ’s saving union with us; but the institution has been so perverted, that as a general thing it is not a true revelation of Christ. We must learn first from Christ what marriage ought to be, and then it in turn will reveal to us more of the Lord than we could know without it.

The Patient Self-Control of Love

There is a world of instruction for us in the statement that “even Christ did not please Himself” (Rom. 15:3). He loved the church, and gave Himself for it. Yet He does not force Himself upon any; He has an infinite and continuous longing for

the response to His love, yet He is patient and forbearing. He stands at the door and knocks, letting us know that He loves us with an everlasting love, but He will do nothing without our consent. He will not press His attentions upon us. His long-suffering, forbearing love, always pleading, and yet waiting, is the most marvelous in the universe. Whoever knows the love of Christ for him, will know the tender considerateness that ought to be shown to a wife.

Arranging a Marriage

In order to understand the truth about anything, we must go to the beginning of it. When the disciples asked Jesus a question concerning marriage and divorce, referring to certain regulations that had been given by Moses, Jesus said that these were because of the hardness of their hearts, “but from the beginning it was not so” (Matt. 19:8); and then He quoted the record in Genesis.

We often read in the papers that “a marriage

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

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

Read the beautiful story in the twenty-fourth chapter of Genesis. Abraham’s tried servant, who

had the same faith as his master, was sent in search of the one whom God had chosen for Isaac. When the servant said, “perhaps the woman will not be willing to follow me to this land,” Abraham replied, “The Lord before whom I walk will send His angel with thee, and prosper thy way” (Gen. 24:5, 40). And so it was. And after traveling a long distance, the servant stopped at a well, and prayed to the Lord to show him which of the damsels that came to draw water was the one for his master’s son. He did not pray aloud, but spoke in his heart, and even before he had finished praying, the sign which he had asked was granted.

The whole matter was arranged by the Lord, and the relatives of Rebecca, as well as Rebecca herself, recognized the fact. They said, “The thing comes from the Lord; we cannot speak to you either bad or good. Here is Rebekah before you; take her and go, and let her be your master’s son’s wife, as the Lord has spoken” (vv. 50, 51). And Rebecca, when asked if she would go at once, said, “I will go.” Then the return journey was made, “and the servant told Isaac all the things that he had

done. Then Isaac brought her into his mother Sarah's tent; and he took Rebekah and she became his wife, and he loved her" (vv. 66, 67).

"Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are children of promise" (Gal. 4:28). Yes; also as Adam was, we are new creatures. Therefore in those two instances we have a picture of true Christian marriage, of such marriage as will be an effective safeguard against the violation of the seventh commandment.

Who Will Choose?

But someone will say, "How unsatisfactory, to have no courtship, no love-making, beforehand." Well, satisfaction all one's life after marriage is far better than a little brief satisfaction beforehand. "Courtship" and "love-making" are terms that should not be used among Christians. Love cannot be made, for it is of God, and has existed from eternity. We can only allow Him to shed it abroad in our hearts by His Holy Spirit. Whoever attempts to make love can produce at the best only a

counterfeit. And where God is allowed to direct and indicate His choice, there is no necessity for courtship. We hear much about heresy, which means, choosing for one's self. God is the only One who has the wisdom and the right to choose. He who chooses for himself, whether in the matter of marriage or anything else, is a real heretic. Such a course shows distrust of God; it is in reality a violation of the first commandment.

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

When all the animals; were brought before Adam, for him to name them, he could not find among them a help fit for him, but when God brought Eve to him he recognized her as his complement (his completing). Suppose now that out of the thousands of women that a man may see, he chooses for himself one that was not made for him, who cannot fill out that which is lacking in his life, and who is not a help fitted for him. Is it not plain that the mistake which he makes is of the same kind, though less in degree, that Adam would have made if he had chosen one of the creatures that first passed before him, instead of waiting for the one whom God made for him? This is the reason why there is so much of the animal, and so little of the spiritual in many marriages.

I would that I could speak confidentially and personally to every young person whose life is all before him, and who has it in his power to accept happiness at the hands of God, or to make shipwreck of it. There are infinite possibilities before every one, when God is allowed to order the life. Contrast, for example, the uncertainties, the

doubt, the uneasiness, the misunderstandings, heart-burnings and jealousies, the fear that one may be mistaken, the wonder if the other is sincere and constant, with the calm inexpressible joy, and quiet restful peace that comes when God's choice is recognized. The two will know that God has brought them together as surely as they know that He is their Creator. It is a common saying that the course of true love never runs smooth; but when two persons love in the Lord, their trust in each other is the same as their trust in God, and the certainty of their mutual love is the same as their certainty of sins forgiven.

The Hidden Working of God

From the microscopic world we may learn a wonderful lesson. The careful and patient observer sees under his glass hundreds of simple cells, either of plants or animals, all in constant motion. There is as much definiteness in their movements as there is in those of the thousands of men that we see passing and passing again on the streets. Watch one of them, and you may see it in its coarse approach

very closely to another one, but instead of touching they separate instantly, as when two similar magnetic poles are brought together. But watch it further, and you will see it come close to another, and these two by common impulse will join and become one.

Is this accidental? If it were, why did not the first two join when they were so close together that they had to change their course in order to keep apart? No; these simple cells have no mind of their own, but God's mind directs them. In them we see God at work in His secret place; and can it be that He who guides in the union of the lowest forms of life, in bodies so small that their universe is a drop of water, will not as certainly direct in the higher creation, in beings whom He has made to rule the worlds? If in this complex being the will of the Lord is as fully done as in the simple atom, then the work will be perfect, never to be undone, for "whatever God does, it shall be forever. Nothing can be added to it, and nothing taken from it. God does it, that men should fear before Him" (Eccl. 3:14).

Working Contrary to God's Plan

Christ, referring to the beginning when God brought Eve to Adam, said, “what God has joined together, let not man separate” (Mark 10:9). Man’s attempt to separate that which God has joined is, according to Christ’s words, the committing of adultery. Suppose then, having in view the exceeding breadth of the law, we carry this matter back to the beginning. If a man does not wait God’s time to bring to him the woman whom He has designed as his counterpart, we have, if not the separating of what God has joined together, then the keeping separated of that which God had designed to join, as well as the joining of that which God did not purpose should be joined. What else can this be but adultery? And this is one of the commonest causes of that which man recognizes as adultery. God’s commandments are not directed merely against the final act of sin, but against its inception, against everything that could possibly lead to the act. “His command is everlasting life” (John 12:50), and cannot possibly have any

connection whatever with death, or with anything that can end in death.

Faithfulness to God is the Safeguard against Adultery

Although we are God's offspring, He says, "I am married to you" (Jer. 3:14). Eve was Adam's offspring, yet she was married to him. So we are to recognize ourselves as united to God, channels for the stream of life from God, and are to give diligence, to preserve that stream uncontaminated. The committing of adultery, the perversion of that life, is primarily a sin against God, so much so that any injury to any person is eclipsed by it. David, referring to his sin, not only in taking the wife of Uriah, but in causing him to be killed, said, "Against You, You only, have I sinned, and done this evil in Your sight" (Ps. 51:4). Joseph, when tempted by Potiphar's wife, reminded her of how much confidence his master rested in him, having given him absolute control of his household; and then, instead of saying, as one might expect, that he could not commit such a crime against his master,

he said, “How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?” (Gen. 39:9). We have therefore only to keep God before our eyes continually, and to be loyal to Him, allowing His life to flow through us, and there will be no danger of our doing any injury to any person on earth.

The Flesh is Against the Spirit

It is true in the fullest sense that we are God’s offspring, for there can be no life except from Him. “In Him we live, and move, and have our being” (Acts 17:28). It is evident, therefore, that God ought by right to have the prime control in the bringing of every new creature into existence. Otherwise there is a violation of the commandment. This is plain from the following Scripture: “Adulterers and adulteresses! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God?” (James 4:4). “If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him” (1 John 2:15). Love of the world, union with the world, is therefore the very essence of adultery, and as such is forbidden by the commandment. Now we read

that “the lust of the flesh” is of the world. Therefore it follows that whatever is the result of carnal desire, and not the working of God’s Spirit, is adultery.

Instruments of God

Someone doubtless says: “How can it be otherwise, so long as we are in the flesh?” Very easily, if God is allowed to have His own way. He has given Christ’s power over all flesh, and “you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you” (Rom. 8:9). We are to recognize our bodies as the dwelling place of God, and all our members instruments of His righteousness. He is to be allowed to work in us both to will and to do. The unrighteous man is to forsake his thoughts, but only that God may think His thoughts in him, and he is to forsake his ways, that God may reveal His ways in him, “casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ” (2 Cor. 10:5). It is not simply on the Sabbath day,

but all the time, that we are not to do our own ways, nor find our own pleasure. Even now, in individuals, God's kingdom is to come and His will be done on earth as it is in heaven, in order that at last it may be so all over the earth.

Now it is evident that a child born of parents living thus fully joined to the Lord, would be born not of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. That this is possible is seen in the birth of John the Baptist; his parents were "both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the law blameless." And he was "filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother's womb." Read also Gal. 4:22, 23: "For it is written that Abraham had two sons: the one by a bondwoman, the other by a freewoman. But he who was of the bondwoman was born according to the flesh, and he of the freewoman through promise." And again, verse 29: "But, as he who was born according to the flesh then persecuted him who was born according to the Spirit, even so it is now."

Here we see a direct contrast: one child born of the flesh, another born of the Spirit; and since all who are Christ's are Abraham's seed, and in Isaac is his seed called, it is plain that just such a birth as Isaac had is the right of every child, and is to be expected of every Christian parent. We might mention the case of Jeremiah, who was ordained a prophet of God before he was born, and others as well, to show that the cases cited are not more unique specimens.

The Power of the New Birth

If any say, "This is too high; we cannot attain to it," or, recognizing its possibility, mourn over their grievous failures, let them be comforted with the knowledge that God is able to make all grace abound, and that He does not remember the sins of our youth, but puts them away from us as far as the east is from the west. It is possible for a man to be born again, even when he is old, so that all may be heirs of God, and of Him only. By the new birth we are delivered from all the evil inherited in the first birth, and this is the comfort that parents may have,

not simply for themselves, when they think of their sinful heritage, but for the children who through their ignorance or self-will, may have been born after the flesh.

The commandments of God are not mere negative precepts, but positive assurances: “You shall not commit adultery.” This is a promise that the stream of God’s life, if we but yield to it, will flow through us undefiled, making us in all our ways perfect even as our Father in heaven is perfect. This is the fountain opened for sin and uncleanness. Given free course through us, it cleanses us from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, itself remaining undefiled. For by the power of the incarnation and the resurrection of Christ, His life will, if we believe, work mightily in us to swallow up death in victory. We may then rejoice in this commandment more than in all riches, and, submitting to the everlasting life, may begin a new life, fresh and clean, and find even in this sin-cursed earth, an Eden of joy.

The Hope of Eternity

A man makes his own surroundings, so to him who is a new creature, “old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new” (2 Cor. 5:17). Now God says: “For as the new heavens and the new earth which I will make shall remain before Me,” says the Lord, “So shall your descendants and your name remain” (Isa. 66:22). So God expects and provides that every child of truly Christian parents shall also be Christian, and shall live forever. It is the same as with those whose union has been brought about by Him. “They shall not labor in vain, nor bring forth children for trouble; for they shall be the descendants of the blessed of the Lord, and their offspring with them” (Isa. 65:23).

Chapter 8

The 8th Law of Life

“You shall not steal” (Ex. 20:15).

There are very few people who need to be told that it is wrong to break into a shop and rob a cash-box; that burglary, house-breaking, pocket-picking, and so forth, are criminal and sinful acts. These are all recognized as vulgar crimes, and because of this many suppose the commandments that forbid such things are out of date so far as Christians are concerned, and that Christianity has outgrown them. Many people have said: “What do we need of the commandment, ‘You shall not steal’? Everybody knows that stealing is wrong. Even a savage shows, by his attempt to conceal a theft, that he knows that it is not the right thing.” But we must again repeat that the commandment is exceedingly broad, surpassing man’s highest thought of perfection. While all, with the possible exception of some who from infancy have been trained to theft, know that the grosser acts, of

which the civil law takes notice, are sinful, there are very many professed Christians who in their daily business violate the eighth commandment without the slightest compunction.

The Practice of the Majority

It is not an uncommon thing for people to charge different prices for the same goods; to expose one class of goods for inspection, and to deliver an inferior quality; to take advantage of a customer's ignorance; or in various other ways to get more than the annual worth of a thing sold. Everything of this kind is just as really stealing as to pick one's pocket of his purse; yet it is continually condoned on the ground that it is "business." The fact that "everybody does it" seems to many business men, even though they be professed Christians, to be sufficient justification for any act. They seem to have the idea that if the majority of people are united in any practice, the Lord will regard it as right, even though it is wrong in itself.

Indeed, not only with respect to this commandment, but with all the others, the general custom of the people is of paramount weight with very many. Call attention to a wrong practice, and the reply will be, “Everybody does it;” or present some requirement of the Divine law, and they will say, “Nobody does that nowadays,” thinking that they have thereby settled the matter. But the Lord says, “You shall not follow a crowd to do evil” (Ex. 23:2); and, “Though they join forces, the wicked will not go unpunished” (Prov. 11:21). Much of the “business” that is done in this world is the devil’s business, and will not stand the test of heaven: “whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them” (Matt. 7:12).

“Business Methods - Making a Living”

The false idea that it is the business of every man to “make a living,” leads to many thefts, both small and great. Competition is very keen, and there are many engaged in business, who have no conscience of right or wrong, who fear not God, neither regard man, The unscrupulous customs

which they have introduced into various lines of business, have led many Christian people little by little to lower their own standard. The desire to compete with their rivals, and to keep business, has blunted their fine perception of right and wrong, until things that would once have shocked them, now seem to be right and necessary.

By the term “business methods,” men commonly understand something different from the somewhat old-fashioned principles laid down in the Bible. Business and religion are thought to be two separate things; and inasmuch as men are exhorted to be “diligent in business,” men persuade themselves that whatever is “business” is correct. They forget that at the same time that they are “diligent in business” they are to be “fervent in spirit, serving the Lord” (Rom. 12:11). The sole business of all man is to serve the Lord. “Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is man’s all. For God will bring every work into judgment, including every secret thing, whether good or evil” (Eccl. 12:13, 14).

God makes it His business to give us a living, and He alone can do it. It is a grave error to suppose that a living can be made out of methods which have death in them. Every sin, every deviation from the law of God, has death in it, and can end only in death. Christ is “the way, the truth, and the life” (John 14:6). Therefore only the way of truth, Christ’s own way, can give life, or in other words, give one “a living.”

Non-Payment of Debts

If one puts his hand into another’s pocket or cashbox and takes money, that is universally recognized as stealing. It must be evident that there is no less sin if one finds money belonging to another, and appropriates it. Likewise if one is entrusted with money to deliver to another, and he fails to do it, but uses it himself, this is also stealing, equally with the other, although it is sometimes designated by a milder term. What is the difference, then, if one has received from another goods or service, for which he owes a certain amount of money, and he fails to pay the

debt? No matter how men may regard it, or what the law of the land may say about it, the fact remains that it is a direct violation of the eighth commandment. The Savior's quotation of this commandment was, "Do not defraud,"—deprive no one of that which is his due; so the convenient way some people have of forgetting to pay their debts is a transgression of this commandment. The Bible way is to pay a thing just as soon as it is due.

Someone will say, "One cannot always have by him the means wherewith to pay a debt." Very true, and this emphasizes the necessity for the apostolic injunction, "Owe no one anything" (Rom. 13:8). If people realized that failure to pay a just debt is a violation of God's law, and if they had a proper sense of the sacredness of the law, they would not order things for which they cannot pay. You again might say, "I go in debt only for the actual necessities of life; if I have no food in the house, and no money, I cannot see my children crying for bread, when the baker will trust me." That is exactly the argument that some people use for taking money without leave. In either case it is lack

of trust in God. Anyone who, because he is in need, incurs a debt which he has no prospect of paying, cannot condemn the act of stealing under pressure of need.

If people would, in fear of the commandment which says, “You shall not steal,” refuse to incur a debt, no matter what the need, they would enjoy some wonderful experiences of what God could do in supplying their need. He knows what His children need, and He says, “Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you” (Matt. 6:33). But when men reverse the order, seeking first to provide for themselves, they shut God off from bestowing upon them the riches of the kingdom. It is impossible to lay too much stress on this feature of the violation of the commandment.

If one has money laid aside for some specific purpose, it is very tempting and very easy to use it for something else. Of course this would be all right if it were simply that one were purposing to purchase a certain thing, and should use that money

for something else instead; but it is far from being right; when the money thus laid aside is due to another. Thus: When one's rent is due, the only way that people with small incomes can be prepared to pay it, is by laying aside each week the weekly proportion. Even though the rent technically be not due until the end of the month, it is really due each week; and if the money be used for food or clothing, or worse yet, for pleasure, so that the sum is not ready, there is a direct transgression of the commandment. One has appropriated that which is not his own. The money laid aside week by week belongs to the landlord, as much as though it were already in his pocket. The fact that we are allowed to keep it in our possession for a time, does not give us any more right to use it than we would have to use an equal amount that some other tenant had entrusted to us to pay to the landlord on his account.

What We Owe to the World

To all of us the Scripture says, "You are not your own" (1 Cor. 6:19). The whole law of which

the eighth commandment is a part, is summed up in these words: “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind,” and “your neighbor as yourself” (Luke 10:27). Love means service. The fact that we are not our own, but belong to the Lord, who not only has made us, but who has redeemed us, shows that our service belongs to Him. The Apostle Paul recognized this when he said, “There stood by me this night an angel of the God to whom I belong and whom I serve” (Acts 27:23). So the law requires that we shall serve the Lord with all our soul and strength and mind.

But we cannot do anything directly for the Lord. He is not in need of food or clothing, and we could not supply Him if He were. But He has shown us how to render service to Him. His life is given to the world; therefore He says that every service rendered to man is done to Him. We are exhorted, “Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with your might.” To perform our daily labor with all the strength of body and mind that we have is, if

done in the fear of God, to love and serve the Lord with all our strength. So the Apostle's exhortation is, "Bondservants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh, not with eye-service, as men-pleasers, but in sincerity of heart, fearing God. And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance; for you serve the Lord Christ" (Col. 3:22–24).

Strength is more than money; therefore if one serves with less than his full strength, or is content to do poor work, on any pretext whatever, he is just as surely guilty of fraud as though he kept back money that belonged to another. The commandment, "You shall not steal," requires us always to give our best strength, and to do our best work. It is a sin and disgrace for a professed Christian to do poor work.

This does not mean that anybody can at once be master of his business, but it does mean that one should always do his best, and always be striving to improve himself, and that he should not assume

to be able to do what he is not. If a man be a carpenter, for instance, and someone entrusts work to him expecting him to be a skilled laborer, and he spoils the job, putting his employer to additional expense because of his incapacity, it is fraud.

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

Labor is life, and money is no equivalent for life. He who works only for what he gets, and who says that he is rendering sufficient service for the small wages he receives, has a very low estimate of the value of his life. If his work is really worth no

more than the money he receives, he is robbing God of strength due Him, and so is robbing the world of service that he ought to render; for, contrary to the common idea, “the world owes me a living,” we owe to the world the living which God has already given us in advance.

Robbing God

There is another feature of this question that few people think of. The commandment is continually broken by men who would no more think of taking money from another man than of cutting off their own right hand. You might leave any amount of money with them, uncounted, and they would return it all; yet they are guilty of robbery.

God asks this plain question: “Will a man rob God?” The people of whom He asks it think that they are innocent, for they reply, “Wherein have we robbed Thee?” and the Lord says, “In tithes and offerings.” And then He continues, “You are cursed with a curse, for you have robbed Me, even

this whole nation. Bring all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be food in My house, and try Me now in this,” Says the Lord of hosts, “If I will not open for you the windows of heaven And pour out for you such blessing That there will not be room enough to receive it. “And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, so that he will not destroy the fruit of your ground, nor shall the vine fail to bear fruit for you in the field,” says the Lord of hosts; and all nations will call you blessed, for you will be a delightful land,” says the Lord of hosts” (Mal. 3:9–12).

This reproof and promise have special application at this time, for the message has reference to the speedy coming of the day of the Lord. It is not local in its application, but reaches to the end of time. It is addressed specially to those who think they are serving the Lord, but who in a most important particular are not. If it is a grievous sin to steal from man, what can be said of robbing God!

One can rob another only by appropriating

something that belongs to that other. So the fact that God charges us with robbing Him with respect to the tithe proves that the tithe belongs to Him. This is plainly stated in the Scripture. “And all the tithe of the land, whether of the seed of the land or of the fruit of the tree, is the Lord’s. It is holy to the Lord” (Lev. 27:30). It may be said that this is only under the Levitical law. But truth is truth forever: that which is the Lord’s once, remains His always. The tithe of all that we receive belongs to the Lord, and not to us, even though technically we have earned it, and it is paid to us in wages. To one tenth of our income we have no more right than we have to our neighbor’s money. God lets it come into our possession for a test as to whether or not we really regard the rights of property, and recognize Him as the owner of all things.

Christ’s Teaching Concerning Tithe Paying

“But did not the Lord reprove the Scribes and Pharisees for their scrupulous payment of tithes?” No, He did not; hear His own words: “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you pay tithe

of mint and anise and cummin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faith. These you ought to have done, without leaving the others undone” (Matt. 23:23). Instead of saying that they ought not to have paid tithe, Jesus says that they ought to have done it, but they ought not to have made their strictness in this matter an excuse for neglecting something else. “You ought,” means, You owe it. The Savior recognized the tithe as belonging to the Lord, by saying that we owe it to Him. He says also that we ought to be very strict in this matter; for the Scribes and Pharisees tithed herbs that were of trifling value, and He says they ought to have done it.

Tithe Before the Days of Moses

The payment of the tithes was long before the days of Moses. When Jacob had his vision of God, as he was fleeing homeless and desolate from the wrath of his brother, he said, “of all that You give me I will surely give a tenth to You” (Gen. 28:22). And many years before this, Abraham returning with the recovered spoil, taken from the city of

Sodom, was met by God's priest, Melchizedek, to whom he gave the tenth of all. Abraham had sworn that he would not take so much as a shoelace of that which belonged to the king of Sodom, so he returned the goods which he had recovered to their proper owners,—the tenth to the Lord, and nine-tenths to the king, to use as he thought fit.

All who are Christ's are Abraham's seed, and heirs with him of the promise. The oath of God to Abraham supports us in fleeing for refuge to the most holy place where Christ is priest after the order of Melchizedek. Therefore the obligation to pay tithe is the same upon us as it was upon Abraham. And since the tithe belongs to the Lord, it should no more be considered a hardship to return it to Him, than it would be to pay to a neighbor some money that was given us in trust for him.

The Tithe and the Sabbath

The tithe rests on the same basis as the Sabbath; the same expression is used of both: "the

seventh day is the sabbath of the Lord thy God.” It is God’s holy day. “The tithe is the Lord’s.” “It is holy to the Lord.” Both serve the same purpose. The Sabbath is not a burden, but it teaches us God’s power, in which we may rest. The payment of tithe is not a burden, because it does not belong to us; but God has arranged that it should come into our hands, in order that in returning it to Him we may be reminded that “He gives us richly all things to enjoy.” The curse that follows the withholding of the tithe is not an arbitrary exhibition of God’s wrath, but is the natural result of our shutting God out of our lives. The abundant blessing that is promised if all the tithes are brought in, inevitably follows the recognition of Him which keeps us ever in His presence.

Honor God with the First-Fruits

Many who do not deny the obligation to pay tithe, do not pay it, excusing themselves by saying, “I have nothing with which to pay; after I have fed and clothed my family, I have nothing left.” But whoever has wherewith to get food and clothing,

has wherewith to pay the tithe; for the principle taught by the tithe is this: that nine-tenths of what we receive will, with the blessing of God, go further than the whole of it without His blessing. God is to come first in all our considerations; we are to “seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness.” “Honor the Lord with your possessions, and with the first-fruits of all your increase” (Prov. 3:9).

It makes no difference to us what is done with the tithe after we have paid it into the Lord’s treasury. There our responsibility ends. We are to pay, even though it be destroyed. Think of the multitude of offerings that were brought to the Lord merely to be burnt up. By this God would show the people that He did not need their gifts, and would remind them that He could support them even though all their property were destroyed. This is especially necessary for us to remember in these days, just before the day of the Lord, when the seed shall be “rotten under their clods,” the garners laid desolate, the barns broken down, and the corn withered; when the rivers of water shall be dried

up, and the fire devour the pastures of the wilderness, and the flame burn all the trees of the field; when the dust shall be turned into brimstone, and the land into burning pitch. Then it will be a grand thing to have learned that God alone is the hope and stay of His people.

The Basis of Stealing

Why is it that people steal? It is because they think that they have not enough, and they cannot trust God to supply their needs. Some do not know the Lord, and they suppose that they are obliged to look out for themselves. Others who profess to know the Lord, lose their supposed trust as soon as they see difficulty. Therefore we see that the basis of what is generally recognized as stealing is identical with all distrust of God.

There are many who do not pay tithe, because they have never realized that it was a duty. “Will a man rob God?” Many do, who have never robbed their fellow-men, and who have a reputation for honesty. The Lord says that the tenth belongs to

Him. Then He ought to have it. But if I keep it and use it, knowing what the Bible says about it, how can my neighbor have confidence enough in me to trust me with what belongs to him? If a man will rob God, will he not rob his fellow-man? Dare anyone trust such an one? Yes; because there is a law against theft, and the man who steals from his neighbor is not only punished, but he loses credit and reputation. The Lord does not demand His own immediately; He does not call for a settlement every month and every year; so in our blind selfishness we take liberties with Him, persuading ourselves that He does not see nor care. “Yet they say, “The Lord does not see” (Ps. 94:7). And as nobody knows whether we pay tithe or not, we do not lose standing with men; or we may get the credit of paying tithe by paying a fragment of it, and calling it the tithe. That is, we are honest for appearance sake, and because of fear of the law. Let us ask ourselves, is our supposed honesty only a sham, an outside show, and are we honest only because there is danger of being found out and punished?

The Secret of All Honesty

One thing more. The Apostle Paul bears witness to the great liberality of the churches of Macedonia, in spite of their “great trial of affliction,” and “their deep poverty.” He did not need to plead with them to make an offering to the cause of God, but says, “For I bear witness that according to their ability, yes, and beyond their ability, they were freely willing, imploring us with much urgency that we would receive the gift.” The reason for this is that “they first gave themselves to the Lord” (2 Cor. 8:1-5). This is the secret of all honesty; for whoever is honest with the Lord will never defraud any man.

Not simply our property, but we ourselves belong to the Lord, and we are to render to Him His own. When we recognize that we are not our own, but that our whole being belongs to Him, we shall also recognize that we can have no property in our own right. Strength is more than money; and the commandment “You shall not steal” forbids our robbing God of the strength that is His due. If I

wantonly destroy my neighbor's property it is the same as though I steal his goods. All our members belong to the Lord, as instruments of righteousness. If we misuse them in any way, making them serve our own personal gratification, we are guilty of theft. We owe to the Lord, not merely all the strength we may have at this present moment, but all that we might have if we lived according to the law of life in Christ Jesus.

And here we see again that the commandment is life everlasting. All God's requirements are really statements of His promises. He asks nothing from us that He does not first give to us; and in asking for it of us He does not ask that we give it to Him, in the sense that we ourselves are deprived of it, but that we always have it in possession to render to Him. So the commandment "You shall not steal" requiring us to give all the strength of our soul and body to the Lord, means that if we heed His word He will see that we have perfect strength to give to Him. His commandments are not grievous, but on the contrary they assure us all blessings. Everything grows with use, so as we

keep the commandment, yielding to God all the strength which His own everlasting power works in us, we shall go from strength to strength, until at last we appear in Zion before God.

Chapter 9

The 9th Law of Life

“You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor” (Ex. 20:16).

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

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

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

Polite Lying

Custom lies at the foundation of a large amount of the violation of the commandments, the ninth no less than the others. What "everybody does" is supposed to be justifiable. The custom of the people is responsible for a great deal of what is known as "polite lying." God forbid that any of us should be any less courteous than we are; we certainly do not need to cultivate rudeness; but there is a false standard of politeness, and it is the

one too often followed. The sort of politeness that depends upon falsehood is evidently not true courtesy; for “no lie is of the truth,” and truth cannot come from lying. The same Scriptures that command us not to bear false witness also tell us to “be tenderhearted, be courteous” (1 Peter 3:8); therefore we know that the most perfect courtesy is compatible with perfect truthfulness, and cannot exist without it.

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

“The Accuser of Our Brethren”

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

righteous; to call him guilty then is to bear false witness against both man and God.

Losing Confidence

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

bearing false witness by our condemnation. It is a terrible thing to condemn where God justifies.

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

Taking the Risk of Lying

If we ever repeat any story about anybody, we are never safe from the possibility of having lied. In the first place, there is always the possibility of being mistaken: our informant may not have known all the facts, and it may be that the person talked about has done nothing amiss. And in the

second place, even if he were guilty, he may have confessed it to God, and been forgiven, before the story reached the ears of any other person. We may say that we certainly would not repeat anything against a person, if we knew that that person had repented; but as long as we do not know that he has not we are assuming all the risk of lying, both against God and man, when we take up a reproach against our neighbor.

Tale Bearing

Many people seem to think that any amount of gossip is justified, provided one does not tell willful lies. But the Bible says that the one who shall abide in the holy hill of the Lord is “he who does not backbite with his tongue, nor does evil to his neighbor, nor does he take up a reproach against his friend” (Ps. 15:3). That is as much as to say that he who has taken up a reproach against his friend, will not dwell in the tabernacle of God. Aside from any other reason, it is a fact that it is next to impossible, if not quite, to talk about another’s doings or sayings, and speak the exact

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

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

Unnecessary Words

There is a thing spoken of in the fifth chapter of

Matthew, which is not usually understood as coming under the head of the ninth commandment, but is commonly referred to the third. Jesus says, “you have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not swear falsely, but shall perform your oaths to the Lord.’ But I say to you, do not swear at all: neither by heaven, for it is God’s throne; nor by the earth, for it is His footstool; nor by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King. Nor shall you swear by your head, because you cannot make one hair white or black. But let your ‘Yes’ be ‘Yes,’ and your ‘No,’ ‘No.’ For whatever is more than these is from the evil one” (Matt. 5:33–37).

This refers to ordinary conversation, and not to the giving of testimony in a court of law. The Savior Himself gave testimony under oath, before the Jewish Council. The man who always tells the truth, and speaks nothing else can take a judicial oath without any fear. So the injunction, “Swear not at all,” does not refer to this, any more than it refers to the taking of the name of the Lord in vain. The reference is to the strong assertions and pledges with which people are apt to back up their

statements, in order to give them weight.

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

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

is of evil.

Practical Joking

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

Do you wish to know how the Scriptures regard the sort of “fun” that consists in deceiving an unsuspecting person? Read this: “Like a madman who throws firebrands, arrows, and death, is the

man who deceives his neighbor, And says, “I was only joking!”” (Prov. 26:18, 19).

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

The Root of the Matter

But let us now come to the very heart of the subject. If there is truth in the inward parts, there will be no outward manifestation of falsehood. Christ is the Truth; therefore when Christ dwells in the heart by faith, none of the errors to which we have referred will be seen in the life; for He came to bear witness to the truth. (John 18:37). He is called “the Faithful and True Witness” (Rev. 3:14).

To us is given the high honor of being classed with him; for God says: “You are My witnesses,” says the Lord, “and My servant whom I have chosen” (Isa. 43:10). Further on we read: “This people I have formed for Myself; they shall declare My praise” (v. 21). God made man, just as He made everything else, to be a revelation of Himself. “But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light” (1 Peter 2:9).

The inanimate creation is true to its calling, witnessing for God. (See Acts 14:17). The everlasting power and Divinity of God have from the creation of the world until now has been clearly revealed in the things that He has made. Only man has proved false to his trust, defacing the image of God, and repressing the truth in unrighteousness. Yet even in fallen humanity God’s faithfulness and truth are to be seen; for every sinner is an unconscious witness to the long-suffering of God. The man who blasphemes the name of God, and even denies His existence, is a monument of His

tender mercy. It is a fact that “all men are liars;” for while they were made in the image of God, to reveal His character, they exhibit the opposite.

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

Strife and Falsehood

The commandments are all linked together; no one can break one of them without violating the whole. We have read that whoever hates his brother is a murderer, and in like manner we find that he is a liar as well. The Apostle James says, “if you have bitter envy and self-seeking in your hearts, do not boast and lie against the truth” (James 3:14). Christ is the truth, and He is meek

and lowly in heart; now it is a fact that He is come in the flesh, so that every man who cherishes or exhibits bitterness or wrath denies the presence of Christ in the flesh. He holds down the truth in unrighteousness.

The Ultimate Test: Confessing or Denying Christ

In 1 John 2:22, we have the whole case summed up in a single question “Who is a liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ?” The one who denies that Jesus is the Christ, is a liar, and according to this question, nobody else is a liar. Now we have traced falsehood to its lair, and can identify it in its very beginning. If a man has not denied that Jesus is the Christ, he is not a liar; but if he has denied this truth, he is a liar though he never speaks. If you wish to stop lying, you must go to the root of the matter. You may tear off a limb here, and pluck out an evil habit there; but until Jesus is fully recognized and acknowledged as the Christ of God, the lying disposition exists.

Peter at one time denied the Lord, but he did nothing more than every man has done. “By this you know the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God, and every spirit that does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not of God” (1 John 4:2, 3). Moreover, “whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God;” and “whoever is born of God does not sin” (1 John 5:1, 18). By putting these statements together, and thinking carefully over them, we see that every sin that we commit is a denial that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh,—a denial that He is the Son of God,—and therefore that it marks us as liars.

We are told, “The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart” (Rom. 10:8). Christ is the Word, and it is by His presence that even sinners live. So we read further: “if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved” (v. 9).

We can confess only that which already is so, it

is a truth, therefore, that Christ is come in the flesh of every man, and that whoever will confess His presence has salvation. But to confess Christ,—to confess that He is come in the flesh,—is to say from the heart what the Apostle Paul wrote in Gal 2:20: “I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.”

To confess Jesus, therefore, is to be just as He was—to allow Him to dwell in us, and to speak and act through us. If this be the case, we cannot help telling the truth, since He is the truth; and if this be not the case, our whole life will be a lie. The man who has not Christ abiding in him cannot help being a liar.

So the only way any man can keep the ninth commandment is to give himself wholly to the Lord, to be used by Him according to His good pleasure. “It is the Spirit who bears witness, because the Spirit is truth” (1 John 5:6). Christ

said: “you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me” (Acts 1:8). Only as one has the Spirit of truth, can one be capable of telling the truth.

Witnesses to the Truth

Jesus said, “For this cause I was born, and for this cause I have come into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth” (John 18:37). Again, “As My Father has sent Me, even so I send you.” A great mistake that many people make is to suppose that they cannot witness for the truth unless they do a great deal of talking. Just as it is possible for a person to act a lie, so may one act the truth. Often our testimony is a great deal stronger if we keep our mouth shut. It is not necessary for us to be always in an attitude of “defense.” We are not obliged, as witnesses to the truth, to answer every objection that cavilers bring. The Lord says, “Who is blind but My servant, or deaf as My messenger whom I send? Who is blind as he who is perfect, and blind as the Lord’s servant? Seeing many

things, but you do not observe; opening the ears, but he does not hear” (Isa. 42:19, 20). Jesus is the Truth and the Life. His life was sufficient witness to the truth; then when He spoke, His words were faithful testimony, because He spoke just what He was.

Receiving the Truth

It is a common thing to hear that such an one has received the truth. What is it to accept the truth?—It is to accept the Lord Jesus Christ as one’s own personal Savior. No matter how correct anybody’s belief is as to form, he has not the truth unless he has Christ within. Unless a man knows the Lord, he does not even know what the truth is; how then can he tell the truth? To accept the truth, therefore, is no light thing. It is not merely to assent to it, but to be transformed by it.

Believing for Another is Disbelieving God

This is an impossibility. We often here a man say, “I can believe for others, but I cannot believe

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

Let no one persuade himself that he thinks well

of God, unless he believes with absolute certainty that God saves him. Don't talk about believing that He will save somebody else, but not you. If God is true, you can believe Him all the time, when He speaks to you as well as when He speaks to somebody else. What would you think if a man should say to you, "I can believe everything you say, when I hear you talking to somebody else; but as soon as you begin to talk to me I lose all confidence in you, and think that you are lying." Would you think that he had a very high opinion of you? Yet that is the way many people regard the Lord, and they are not ashamed to talk such feelings out right before His face.

Saved from Lying

You say, "Well, then, I am lost, for I have lied all my life." No; you are not lost, for Christ has given Himself to you, and since He is the truth He saves you from all untruth. All His commandments are promises; so when He says that we shall not bear false witness against our neighbor, He means that He will see to it that we witness to the truth, if

we but receive Him. Christ died for the ungodly, for all the ungodly; therefore the sum of all lying, in fact, the only lie we can really tell, is to neglect this great salvation. It is the same as saying either that Christ has not died, or else that His death is not sufficient ransom. But, on the other hand, as soon as we accept salvation, our whole life of lying ceases.

It is not enough to be on our guard against falsehood; we must submit to the truth. We must by yielding bear witness to the fact that God is abundantly able to do all that He has undertaken. His word is true from the beginning, and is settled forever in heaven; therefore we may depend upon it. It will not fail us. God Himself has such confidence in it that He says to every one who takes Him at His word, “You shall not bear false witness.” “If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free” (John 8:31, 32).

Chapter 10

The 10th Law of Life

“You shall not covet your neighbor’s house; you shall not covet your neighbor’s wife, nor his male servant, nor his female servant, nor his ox, nor his donkey, nor anything that is your neighbor’s” (Ex. 20:17).

We come now to the last of the series. We have completed the circle, and end just where we began. We say that we end just where we began; for the first commandment says, “You shall have no other gods before Me,” and in Col. 3:5 we read that covetousness is idolatry.

The Infinite Circle of the Law

The law of God is a complete circle, beginning and ending in God; or, rather, having neither beginning nor end. God inhabits eternity, and the circle of His law encompasses the universe. There is nothing in heaven or earth that does not come

within the circle. Its range is unlimited. “Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law [literally, “in the law,” that is, “within the range, sphere or jurisdiction of the law”]: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God” (Rom 3:19).

Going Outside the Law

What is sin?—“Sin is the transgression of the law.”

What does “transgression” mean?—It means “a going across.” Sin, therefore is the act of going across God’s law.

But when one transgressions,—goes outside the bounds—God’s law, where can he go? Ah, that is a pertinent question. There is no piece for one to go outside of God’s law, except to go out of the universe, that is, to cease to be. “The wages of sin is death.” “Sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death.”

This can be made apparent in another manner. The law of God is His life, flowing in an endless stream from His throne. Now wherever the word of God has free course, there is perfect life. If we allow ourselves to be simply channels for the river of life, as we are designed to be, the life flowing through us will hold us in life. But what will take place if we put ourselves squarely across the stream? Everybody knows the result of placing any obstacle in the way of a stream of water. The first thing is a damming up of the stream, and when water is dammed up, and becomes stagnant, it breeds death, until the force of the on-coming stream breaks away all the barriers, and the waters flow on again unhindered. But that is the destruction of the thing that placed itself across the current. It is infinitely better to be in the line of life, in harmony with it,—channels for the stream of life,—than to be obstacles to be swept away.

God's Mercy to Transgressors

You say that there are many people who

transgress God's law, and yet live. Yes there are, and that is one of the greatest marvels of the grace of God. Unbelievers rail against God, charging Him with injustice, because sentence of death is pronounced upon the ungodly; but they forget that the infinite mercy of God is manifested every moment in keeping them in life, to allow them opportunity to come into harmony with it, so that they need not die.

This life is but a span, a moment long as it seems to short-sighted men, it is but the twinkling of an eye to God. We do not at once see the results of the transgression of God's law, and men fancy that because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, as they reckon time, they can sin with impunity. "He who is often rebuked, and hardens his neck, will suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy" (Prov. 29:1).

Not Imputing Their Trespasses to them

The reason why men who transgress the law do not instantly die, is that God is still in Christ,

reconciling the world unto Himself, “not imputing their trespasses to them” (2 Cor. 5:19). “If You, Lord, should mark iniquities, O Lord, who could stand? But there is forgiveness with You, that You may be feared” (Ps. 130:3, 4). God does not now impute sin to men; but takes it all on Himself. He knows that men are foolish and ignorant, and He has “compassion on those who are ignorant and going astray” (Heb. 5:2). Knowing their ignorance, He does not take them at their word, when they say that they do not wish to be kept within the bounds of His life,—that they wish to be free from its “restraints,” as they call it, and to live their own lives independently of Him. His long-suffering still waits as in the days of Noah; but by and by there will come a day when sufficient light will have shone to enable every one to make a final choice; and then those who deliberately choose to go outside of God’s law, will be taken at their word and allowed to go—where? Where can they go, when God’s law fills the universe, and they go outside? For them there will be no future; they will “be as though they had never been.”

In the tenth commandment, more than in any other, the unity of the entire law is seen. It summarizes all the commandments, even as the first of them does. It takes in the whole duty of man. “You shall not covet.” This precept underlies and is the heart of every commandment. In Rom. 7:7 we read: “I would not have known covetousness (lust) unless the law had said, “You shall not covet.”

Someone says, “I thought lust had to do with the seventh commandment.” So it has, and with every other one as well. Lust simply means desire; and since in the fall the desire of mankind is only to evil, lust has degenerated into evil desire, it makes no difference for what. A desire for anything that is forbidden is lust, and is contrary to the whole law of God. “Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death” (James 1:15).

So we see that the tenth commandment strikes at the root of all sin. The Apostle Paul takes it and, makes it the summing up of the whole law. He who

keeps the tenth commandment, cannot so much as think of breaking any other; he cannot have the slightest idea to sin.

The Spirituality of the Law

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

Well, men have actually been so blindly presumptuous as to try to enforce the tenth commandment. There was only one way, and that was by the Inquisition, invented by the Papacy,

which exalted itself to God's place, and even above Him. Men were tortured to wring out of them the secrets of their hearts, and punished for even the thought that they confessed to having harbored. But nobody but God can find out the secrets of men's hearts, and He does not have to find them out, because "all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account" (Heb. 4:13). So no human power or wisdom can ever determine when the tenth commandment has been broken. When the thought of sin, which is forbidden by the tenth commandment, goes so far as to manifest itself, it comes under the head of some of the other commandments. To take your neighbor's wife is a violation of the seventh commandment; to seize upon his house or goods, is a violation of the eighth.

So we see that this tenth commandment deals with that which is all within one's own mind, and is simply the drawing out and summing up of the entire ten. It shows the breadth and spirituality of the whole law of God; for as we have previously learned, "Whoever looks at a woman to lust for her

has already committed adultery with her in his heart” (Matt. 4:28). It is not necessary that one shall have carried his wrong desire into execution, in order to violate any one of the commandments. “The devising of foolishness is sin” (Prov. 24:9).

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

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

enforce is not God's law, but something directly opposed to it.

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

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

Covetousness is idolatry. This is indicated in 1

Timothy 6:17: “Command those who are rich in this present age not to be haughty, nor to trust in uncertain riches but in the living God, who gives us richly all things to enjoy.” As you read this, remember the words of Christ: “Take heed and beware of covetousness, for one’s life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses” (Luke 12:15). And then follows the story of the man whose ground brought forth abundantly, and whose barns were overflowing, and who proposed to say to his soul, “Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years; take your ease; eat, drink, and be merry.” That man was trusting in uncertain riches, instead of in the living God, who had given him his abundance. Instead of trusting God, whom he could not see, he made a god of that which he could see, and his hands could handle.

The Love of Money

“But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and

perdition. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows” (1 Tim. 6:9, 10).

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

Hoarding Means Poverty

“There is one who scatters, yet increases more; and there is one who withholds more than is right, but it leads to poverty” (Prov. 11:24). It is a law of God’s universe that that which is hoarded up

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

“Yet this poor man, with all his store,
Died in great want,—the want of more.”

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

Riches Not Robbery

There seems to be in this age a special onslaught against rich men, as though to be rich

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

Content with Food and Raiment

The word “covetousness” is translated from a number of different words, but as used in our study it means to desire more than one needs. If a man has no coat, it is not a sin for him to desire it sufficiently to make the effort to get it; that this is compatible with perfect content, for content does not mean lazy indifference.

“Having food and raiment, let us be therewith content.” The evil arises from this, that people think that they must specify just how much and

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

Just a word with regard to clothing. Do not forget that its true object is comfort and decency, and not adornment. It should simply be that which is suitable, and then one need have no fear of its being in bad taste. When one is especially noticeable because of what one has on, that is just as bad taste as to be noticeable because of a lack of clothing. One should be noticed, if noticed at all, for what one is, and not for what one has or has not. The clothing, that is no part of the individual, it is altogether secondary to the clothing which

grows on one as the result of the Spirit within. A knowledge of the relative value of things, and that God Himself, who gives us life, and who thereby shows that it is His business to supply the things necessary for its proper sustenance, and that He alone can do it, will bring constant and perfect contentment.

Contentment is not Laziness

Someone may say, “That doctrine will tend to laziness; if the stimulus of the necessity to earn one’s own living be taken away,—if men get the idea that God will provide everything for them,—they will not labor.” Not so; the man who serves the living God can never be lazy. We have learned that man is not to work for money, but because he owes his best service to the world. The man who knows the Lord, and who understands his relation to Him, will work just as hard and as diligently without any prospect of wages, as he will for a large salary, knowing that it is his business to give his strength to the world, in the service of Christ, and it is the Lord’s business to sustain his life.

Discontentment and Worry is Covetousness and Idolatry

Look again at what constitutes covetousness. We have all thought that it consisted in not desiring a rich man's possessions, but we shall see that it comes much closer to us than that. Jesus says: "Now if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will He not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? "Therefore do not worry, saying, "What shall we eat?" or "What shall we drink?" or "What shall we wear?" For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things" (Matt. 6:30–32).

We see from this that anxiety for food and drink and clothing, is the characteristic of the heathen, and is therefore idolatry. So again we are brought face to face with the truth that covetousness is idolatry, "You cannot serve God and mammon." We cannot be worrying over what we have not, or over the loss of something that we

had, and at the same time be serving God. Everything in this world belongs to somebody; therefore if we covet something that we have not we are coveting what belongs to somebody also wishing to deprive some other person of something in order that we may be pleased. But that is not to love our neighbor as ourself, and so is a violation of the whole law. Or, if it be claimed that there is a great deal that is not in the possession of anybody, and which is therefore open to all, we must still admit that it belongs to the Lord, who will put us in the way of getting it, if it be right for us to have it; and if we complain because we have it not, we are manifesting a lack of trust in God's loving care for us.

Absolute Trust in Our Father

See how this commandment teaches us absolute trust in God, which is the perfection of Christianity. The Lord knows what we have need of before we ask Him, and He has provided it before we become conscious of our need, just because He is our Father. We have much to learn

from the relation between parent and child. We are to receive the kingdom of God as little children; and the child is the perfect example of trust and content, yet it is not lazy. The unspoiled child, or the child yet too young to have learned any of that worldly wisdom that consists in worry (dignified by the title of “looking out for the future”) expects as a matter of course to have its wants supplied, and is content with what is received. It never thinks of food until it is hungry, and then it receives the necessary supply, because the parents have anticipated the little one’s needs. Why cannot those parents learn a lesson from themselves? Why should they think that they are better than their Father?

Trust is not Idleness

But the child is not idle; far from it. There is nothing more active than a healthy child. The father does not work so many hours a day, nor apply himself so persistently as his child does. It will work the whole day for nothing. To no purpose, do you say? Oh, no; it is obeying the

Scripture injunction, “Whatsoever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might.” Laziness is an acquired habit, the result of wrong training by parents. It is only the man who thinks that the responsibility of the world rests upon him, that works to no purpose; for he goes about his tasks with a drawn, set face, and a look of anxiety, which reflects no credit whatever upon the God whom he may be professing to serve; and remember that the sole business of man on this earth is to glorify God.

Saying, “There is no God”

People become sad and moody under their self-imposed burdens. That is equivalent to saying that there is no God. The fool says in his heart, “There is no God,” and he acts as though there were none, and that the weight of the world, and the responsibility for conducting its affairs properly, rested on him. Having an abundance of goods in one’s possession, and trusting in them, is not a whit worse than worrying over the lack of them. The one who does this, shows that he would do just as the rich fool did, if he were but situated in the same

way.

The Truest Happiness

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

The Sum of the Matter

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

the very opposite of heathenism.

“Incline my heart to Your testimonies, and not to covetousness” (Ps. 119:36). Covetousness, therefore, is the desire for anything contrary to the commandments, anything except God’s life that we may desire with our whole soul. The man who can say to the Lord, “Whom have I in heaven but You? And there is none upon earth that I desire besides You” (Ps. 73:25), is safe from the transgression of the tenth commandment, and so from the commission of any sin.

Satisfaction in Service

The commandments of the Lord are life everlasting, “and in keeping them there is great reward.” Not for keeping them, mind you, but in keeping them. The reward is the pure, perfect, simple life that they bring. Take heed, beware of covetousness even in the service of God. Beware of thinking that you would serve God, keep His Sabbath, for instance, if you were situated financially so that you could. There would be no

virtue in your service even if you did keep it under such conditions. What kind of god is it that you propose to serve? Is it one who needs your service? or one whom you need to serve whom is rich reward? The answer to this marks the difference between heathenism and Christianity.

The satisfaction of serving Christ indeed, of knowing Him, and feeling His life in us, impelling us to action, is so great that with it one cares for nothing else. The deliciousness of perfect trust, of resting in the everlasting arms, and by that very resting partaking of their intense activity, is greater than the possession of all riches. He who has, and appropriates, the fulness of God's life is so far from desiring anything else, that he would spurn the offer of anything that would rob him of any of that which is his by faith. "He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?" (Rom. 8:32) and he who has all things, and knows that he has them, is absolutely shut off from the possibility of covetousness.