

The Tenth Commandment Exodus 20:17

We have come to the last commandment, the tenth commandment and taking my previous lessons on the purpose of the giving of the law, it has been time well spent. Anytime we study the word of God is time well spent providing our studies are actually based on the word of God.

Only one other time in my ministry as a pastor have I preached on or about the ten commandments and that was way back in the '90's at my first church. My folks in that church told me that they had never realized how relevant the commandments are to our time. That was very affirming for me as a new pastor. And I didn't go nearly in depth as I have for this series here at Eastway.

The primary focus of both series on the commandments has always been that we are not under the law but under grace, recognizing the place God intends for the ten commandments and how they make plain what God calls sin.

The law of Moses or the law of God, was not intended to save anyone. It was not intended to make anyone righteous. This from the pen of the Spirit-inspired former Jewish theologian and then Christian theologian, the apostle Paul, ²¹ *Is the Law then contrary to the promises of God? May it never be! For if a law had been given which was able to impart life, then righteousness would indeed have been based on law.*

²² *But the Scripture has shut up everyone under sin, so that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe.*

²³ *But before faith came, we were kept in custody under the law, being shut up to the faith which was later to be revealed.*

²⁴ *Therefore the Law has become our tutor to lead us to Christ, so that we may be justified by faith.*

(Gal. 3:21-24 NAU)

And this, ³¹ *Do we then nullify the Law through faith? May it never be! On the contrary, we establish the Law. (Rom. 3:31 NAU)*

We establish the law through faith in the One who fulfilled the law on our behalf. That's the grace of God.

NAU Exod. 20:17 "You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife or his male servant or his female servant or his ox or his donkey or anything that belongs to your neighbor."

If the tenth and final commandment does anything, it does two things. First, its literal emphasis prohibits one's evil and sensual desires for one's neighbor's possession. And second, it reinforces our understanding of how much importance God puts on our relationship with our neighbors, who in this context turn out to be fellow Jews who have just come out of Egypt and anyone from a foreign nation who wishes to worship their God.

Do you remember from last weeks lesson that loving our neighbor fulfills the law? And that's a New Testament, New Covenant, truth. Lets read those two passages again to jog our memories. ⁸ *Owe nothing to anyone except to love one another; for he who loves his neighbor has fulfilled the law.*

⁹ *For this, "YOU SHALL NOT COMMIT ADULTERY, YOU SHALL NOT MURDER, YOU SHALL NOT STEAL, YOU SHALL NOT COVET," and if there is any other commandment, it is summed up in this saying, "YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF."*

¹⁰ *Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfillment of the law. (Rom. 13:8-10 NAU)*

¹³ *For you were called to freedom, brethren; only do not turn your freedom into an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another. **14** For the whole Law is fulfilled in one word, in the statement, "YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF." (Gal. 5:13-14 NAU)*

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In other words, the last five commandments prohibit murdering one's neighbor and committing adultery with one's neighbor and stealing from one's neighbor and giving false witness against one's neighbor and coveting one's neighbor's possession.

And while I'm doing a little recap and review of our previous lessons, let me remind you why the law was given in the first place, ¹⁷ *What I am saying is this: the Law, which came four hundred and thirty years later, does not invalidate a covenant previously ratified by God, so as to nullify the promise.*

¹⁸ *For if the inheritance is based on law, it is no longer based on a promise; but God has granted it to Abraham by means of a promise.*

¹⁹ *Why the Law then? It was added because of transgressions, (Gal. 3:17-19 NAU)*

Which as I remind you meant that the Jews and the pagan nations around them who all come from Adam and Eve, had been offending God's holiness by their evil and wicked deeds.

God is the only mind reader in the universe.

I hope none of you have ever visited a Psychic or palm reader or Tarot card reader, some of whom claim to be able to read minds and tell the future. And that goes along with believing what one reads in their horoscope. All of those practices as well as their practitioners were forbidden for the Jews and their prohibition lets us know how God sees them. ¹¹ *For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? (1 Cor. 2:11 NAU)* No one but you and God know your thoughts.

Why? Why the tenth commandment? Why would God prohibit the Jews from coveting anything their neighbors have? You do realize, don't you, that coveting is an act that takes place first in the mind or heart? Just how would God know what the Jews were thinking and what they were coveting? It's estimated that there were around 1.6 million Jews

delivered from Egyptian bondage and who were now waiting around the foot of Mt. Sinai while Moses was receiving the law from God. How would He know what those 1.6 million Jews were thinking? Here is the answer as you already know:

God is omniscient. He knows everything.

This may help.

⁴⁷ *But Jesus, knowing what they were thinking in their heart, took a child and stood him by His side, (Lk. 9:47 NAU)*

²⁹ *His disciples said, "Lo, now You are speaking plainly and are not using a figure of speech.*

³⁰ *"Now we know that You know all things, and have no need for anyone to question You; by this we believe that You came from God." (Jn. 16:29-30 NAU)*

Any questions?

Lets define the Hebrew word "covet."

The English word "covet" occurs only 7 times in the OT. And it means in the Hebrew *to desire and try to acquire, crave, find pleasure in one's evil desires, desire passionately.* Who comes immediately to mind after seeing the meaning of covet? King David, of course. David really messed up life for a bunch of people, including his own family, by coveting his neighbor's wife, Bathsheeba. And then what did this man after God's own heart who would do God's will do next? He summoned her to his house and committed adultery with her. And then when he found out from her that she was with his child, He murdered Bathsheeba's husband trying to cover up his sin.

And who was his neighbor whom he murdered? **2 Samuel 11:3** *So David sent and inquired about the woman. And one said, "Is this not Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam, the wife of Uriah the Hittite?" (2 Sam. 11:3 NAU)*

And who was this Uriah the Hittite? A friend and fellow warrior of David's, the captain of David's army. ⁶ *Then David sent to Joab, saying, "Send me Uriah the Hittite." So Joab sent Uriah to David.*

⁷ *When Uriah came to him, David asked concerning the welfare of Joab and the people and the state of the war.*

⁸ *Then David said to Uriah, "Go down to your house, and wash your feet." And Uriah went out of the king's house, and a present from the king was sent out after him. That's called a "bribe." Sounds like what's going on in Washington, DC, doesn't it? Politicians are infamous for covering up their crimes.*

⁹ *But Uriah slept at the door of the king's house with all the servants of his lord, and did not go down to his house.*

¹⁰ *Now when they told David, saying, "Uriah did not go down to his house," David said to Uriah, "Have you not come from a journey? Why did you not go down to your house?"*

¹¹ *Uriah said to David, "The ark and Israel and Judah are staying in temporary shelters, and my lord Joab and the servants of my lord are camping in the open field. Shall I then go to my house to eat and to drink and to lie with my wife? By your life and the life of your soul, I will not do this thing."*

¹² *Then David said to Uriah, "Stay here today also, and tomorrow I will let you go." So Uriah remained in Jerusalem that day and the next.*

¹³ *Now David called him, and he ate and drank before him, and he made him drunk; and in the evening he went out to lie on his bed with his lord's servants, but he did not go down to his house.*

¹⁴ *Now in the morning David wrote a letter to Joab and sent it by the hand of Uriah.*

¹⁵ *He had written in the letter, saying, "Place Uriah in the front line of the fiercest battle and withdraw from him, so that he may be struck down and die."*

¹⁶ *So it was as Joab kept watch on the city, that he put Uriah at the place where he knew there were valiant men.*

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¹⁷ *The men of the city went out and fought against Joab, and some of the people among David's servants fell; and Uriah the Hittite also died.*

¹⁸ *Then Joab sent and reported to David all the events of the war.*

(2 Sam. 11:6-18 NAU)

Coveting anything your neighbor owns can lead to disaster. And the biggie? Idolatry. Covetousness is idolatry.

⁵ *For this you know with certainty, that no immoral or impure person or covetous man, who is an idolater, has an inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. (Eph. 5:5 NAU)*

⁵ *Therefore consider the members of your earthly body as dead to immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed, which amounts to idolatry. (Col. 3:5 NAU)*

Coveting what one's neighbor possesses is putting their possessions in the place of God who supplies all the needs His children need.

I close with this.

The antidote for coveting? Contentment.

It really is as simple as that, yet it's one of those truths that's easier said than done for a people who grew up with so much temptation to the contrary in a buy-it-over-the-internet generation. And a generation that has become more and more promiscuous over the last five decades.

¹⁰ *But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly, that now at last you have revived your concern for me; indeed, you were concerned before, but you lacked opportunity.*

¹¹ *Not that I speak from want, for I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I am. (Phil. 4:10-11 NAU)*

Without the indwelling strength and power provided by the Holy Spirit, it is impossible to be Biblically content. But with Him, all things are possible. In Jesus' name. Amen.

