

Exodus pt. 40
The Ten Commandments pt. 8
The Heart of the Matter
Exodus 20:14 - 15, 17

I. Introduction

- A. Today we will wrap up our study of the Ten Commandments. I've decided to group the seventh, eighth, and tenth commandments as they share some commonalities with one another.
 - 1. 7th Commandment: "You shall not commit adultery." (Exodus 20:14)
 - 2. 8th Commandment: "You shall not steal." (Exodus 20:15)
 - 3. 10th Commandment: "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." (Exodus 20:17)
- B. The seventh and eighth both deal with taking something that belongs to someone else. And the tenth commandment deals with the underlying issue in both. As I am hopeful that you understand the dangers of the sins of stealing and adultery I am going to focus more so on coveting today. As we have done throughout our study of Exodus, we will examine these commandments by asking four important questions.
 - 1. What do these commandments teach us about God?
 - 2. How do they point us towards Christ?
 - 3. How do they point us towards the gospel?
- C. How do they apply to New Testament believers?

II. What Do these Commandments Teach Us About God?

- A. God is Jealous for His People
 - 1. The most commonly used metaphor that God used to describe Israel's habitual idolatry, throughout the old testament, is adultery. God says, time and time again, that He has been a faithful and loving husband and yet His bride, Israel, has played the harlot.
 - 2. Likewise, God says that His people steal from Him with regard to their tithes and worship.
- B. God cares about the motives of our hearts not just our actions
 - 1. You may be here and say, "I'm not a thief and I'm not an adulterer." However, notice that the Ten Commandments end with "You shall not covet." That's not a sin of action but a sin of the heart. Notice that coveting covers theft and adultery.
 - 2. Covet - "to desire wrongfully, inordinately, or without due regard for the rights of others."
 - a) It is not wrong to desire good things. God has built within each of us needs and longings. Those desires often actually lead us in following after God and finding His will. While it is not wrong to desire there is a way to desire that is wrong. That is what coveting is. "To desire wrongfully..."
 - b) You shall not covet your neighbor's stuff
 - (1) House, servants, animals, "anything that belongs to him."

- (a) It is fine to desire things. It is fine to see your neighbor's car, for example, and think, "I'd like to get one like that." However, this commandment forbids coveting, "anything that belongs to him." That is wanting his property not merely one like it. Coveting the actual property of another is a path that leads to stealing and possibly even murder.
- (2) Coveting your neighbor's material possessions is stealing in the heart.
- c) You shall not covet your neighbor's wife
 - (1) "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall not commit adultery'; but I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart." (Matthew 5:27 - 28)
- d) Likewise, last week we saw that Jesus taught that anger against a brother is equal to murder of the heart. The Bible teaches us that sin of coveting also leads to murder.
 - (1) What is the source of quarrels and conflicts among you? Is not the source your pleasures the wage war in your members? You lust and do not have; so you commit murder. You are envious and cannot obtain; so you fight and quarrel. You do not have because you do not ask. You ask and do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend it on your pleasures. (James 4:1 - 3)
- 3. So though we may be tempted to think that coveting is not that bad, it can lead us to some pretty nasty places.

III. How Do these Commandments Point Us to Christ?

A. Adultery

1. The scribes and the Pharisees brought a woman caught in adultery, and having set her in the center of the court, they said to Him, "Teacher, this woman has been caught in adultery, in the very act. Now in the Law of Moses commanded us to soon such women; what then do you say?" They were saying this, testing Him, so that they might have grounds for accusing Him. But Jesus stooped down and with His finger wrote on the ground. But when they persisted in asking Him, He straightened up, and said to them, "He who is without sin among you, let him be the first to throw a stone at her." Again He stooped down and wrote on the ground. When they heard it, they began to go out one by one, beginning with the older ones, and He was left alone, and the woman, where she was, in the center of the court. Straightening up, Jesus said to her, "Woman, where are they? Did no one condemn you?" She said, "No one Lord." And Jesus said, "I do not condemn you, either. Go. From now on sin no more." (John 8:3 - 11)
2. This is perhaps one of the most powerful pictures of grace in the entire Bible.
 - a) John clearly states that the motive of the religious leaders in bringing this woman to Jesus was "so that they might have grounds for accusing Him."
 - (1) They pit Jesus against the Law of Moses which allowed for adulterers to put to death. "Moses says she should die, what do you say Jesus?"
 - (2) There is a beautiful picture of all of us here as well. Satan is the "Accuser of the Brethren." These religious leaders made a grave mistake by bringing a sinner to the feet of the Savior. We sit beside her guilty and needing grace.

- b) The woman was “caught in adultery, in the very act.” This isn’t some past sin that she is guilty of but rather a sin she was actively involved in that day.
- (1) It’s interesting to note that there’s a character missing from this story. Adultery, by definition, is a sin requiring two people. If she was caught in the very act, where is the adulterous man?
- c) Notice, Jesus does not answer them at first. Rather He bends down and begins to write something in the sand. As they grow impatient they continue to ask Him what should be done to this poor woman. Jesus stands up and says, “He who is without sin among you, let him be the first to throw a stone at her.” He then stoops back down and continues writing in the dirt.
- (1) There are many ideas of what Jesus writes in the sand but the Bible does not tell us explicitly. My personal theory is that Jesus wrote down the names of sins and then wrote names of specific people in the crowd next to them to show that He knew of their private sins. Whatever, Jesus wrote the effect it had on the crowd is clear.
 - (2) When they heard it, they began to go out one by one, beginning with the older ones, and He was left alone, and the woman,
 - (a) Every person who would be saved must find themselves “left alone with Jesus.” No one can trust in Christ on our behalf. Nothing can be added to the grace of Jesus through faith in Him. We must come to Christ individually and personally. We must cling to Him, and Him alone, in faith if we are to be saved from the wrath to come.
- d) Straightening up, Jesus said to her, “Woman, where are they? Did no one condemn you?” She said, “No one Lord.” And Jesus said, “I do not condemn you, either. Go. From now on sin no more.”
- (1) Jesus does not condemn this woman. It’s interesting by His standard He could have condemned her to death and done it righteously. He has not committed any sin so He can stone her and it merely be keeping the Law. Yet He does not do this because He has a heart of grace for sinners. Jesus came to seek and to save not so that the world would be condemned.
 - (2) Also notice that Jesus instructs her to “go and sin no more.” Jesus’ grace is not meant to be a license for frivolous sin but a safe-haven for those who are guilty to find life and freedom from sin.
- e) Before we move on, I think it is worth mentioning that I believe that the modern church has not done a great job of embodying Jesus’ grace with regard to how we have dealt with adultery and, by extension, divorce. If we are honest, the traditional view of adultery and, to a large extent, divorce has been to treat these things almost as unpardonable sins. A couple of important things should be considered with regard to these issues:
- (1) We live in a fallen world which means that unfortunately, adultery and divorce happen. We should not rejoice in them but we should allow for God’s grace in the event of their occurrence.
 - (2) A principle that Jesus taught is that the way we measure others in judgment will be used against us. We should be careful in passing judgment on the sins of others in a harsh or prideful manner. To do so is to invite God’s judgment in the same way on our own heads.

(3) Jesus taught that lusting is adultery of the heart. So by that definition we are all adulterers, at least at that level. If there is no grace for adulterers we are all under the wrath of God. So before we start handing out “Scarlet letters” we should remember that we are guilty before God as well.

(a) That’s really the point that Jesus is actually making with these shocking words: Jesus is exposing that the Pharisees are not as righteous as they think they are. He does this in typical prophetic fashion by using extreme and shocking language that provokes thought and conviction.

(4) If Jesus can, and does, forgive, redeem, and restore adulterers and divorcees we should love the gospel enough to point adulterers and those affected by divorce to the grace of Christ. We should believe that God’s grace can redeem even the worst of sins and situations. We should be eager to see people restored by grace and not seek their condemnation. Condemnation is the Devil’s work. The job of the Christian is to be an ambassador of reconciliation.

B. Stealing

1. So he then handed Him over to them to be crucified. They took Jesus, therefore, and He went out, bearing His own cross, to the place called the Place of the Skull, which is called in Hebrew, Golgotha. There they crucified Him, and with Him two other men, one on either side, and Jesus in between. (John 19:16 - 28)

a) During Jesus’ death, the Lord was crucified between two criminals being executed. Matthew 27:38 refers to them as “two robbers [who] were crucified with Him, one on the right and one on the left.” (Matthew 27:38)

C. Jesus was crucified between two convicted criminals. He died with the wicked for the wicked.

IV. How Do these Commandments Point Us to the Gospel?

A. But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him. For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life. (Romans 5:8 - 10)

B. Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals, nor thieves, nor the covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, will inherit the kingdom of God. Such were some of you; but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God. (1 Corinthians 6:9 - 10)

1. In this passage we see the reality of the gospel in clear terms. There are two components of the gospel that are both necessary. We might call them the bad news and the good news.

a) The bad news: All of us deserve the wrath of God

b) The good news: The gospel washes us, justifies us, and sanctifies us, and transforms us.

V. How Do these Commandments Apply to Believers?

- A. As we've seen the New Testament not only repeats these commandments but it actually reinforces them. Lust is adultery, coveting is stealing, and anger is murder. This shows us that God cares a great deal on not only what we do but the motives of our hearts. We've also seen that the gospel is the good news that because of Jesus' death and resurrection there is grace for sinful people who have lusted, coveted, and murdered.
- B. Therefore if you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth. For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory. Therefore consider the members of your earthly body as dead to immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, **and greed, which amounts to idolatry.** (Colossians 3:1 - 5)
- C. Notice that Paul is calling Christians to "seek the things above where Christ is seated." We are to be heavenly focused not earthly focused. The reason for this is because we have died with Christ and now live for Him and in Him.
- D. Paul calls us to "consider the members of your earthly body as dead to immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed."
 - 1. Paul often uses the term "dead" as an idiom meaning, "distant from, hostile towards, or rebellious against."
 - 2. In the same way as when we would say, "You're dead to me" we don't mean the person is literally dead but rather the relationship is cut off.
 - 3. When Paul tells us to consider ourselves dead to sin, he isn't saying we will live perfect sinless lives but rather that we should run from sin, hate sin, and fight against it.
- E. But notice the last phrase of Paul's encouragement: we are to be dead to "greed, which amounts to idolatry."
 - 1. The word greed there could be translated as "covetousness." According to the Apostle Paul, covetous greed "amounts to idolatry." When we want something in the wrong way it exposes an idol of the heart.
- F. What I find interesting about this is that the Tenth Commandment serves not only as a summary of the other nine commandments but actually points us back to the first two which deal with idolatry explicitly. Idolatry is the core issue that leads us to all intentional sin. There are sins that we stumble into because our flesh is weak but the sins that we choose to walk in are the result of idolatry.

VI. Conclusion and Application