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C0632 – August 30, 2006 – Ex 20:15-17 – The Decalogue - Part 4

D. The Seventh Commandment (v 15): Stealing

¹⁵ "You shall not steal.

This commandment forbids taking something that does not belong to one. It respects personal property. The commandment is based on God's work of creation and the divine mandate for man to labor. To steal is to acquire something without labor at the expense of someone else's labor.

This is condemned for the Church in Eph 4:28. There is says that a believer who "steals must steal no longer; but rather he must labor, performing with his own hands what is good, so that he will have *something* to share with one who has need" (Eph 4:28). So, the NT command does not merely say "stop stealing" but rather "start laboring" with the result that you are able to share with those who have need. The NT is all about freely giving from one's labor and not about taking what others have labored for. Jesus said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20:35) and "The man who has two tunics is to share with him who has none; and he who has food is to do likewise" (Luke 3:11). Stealing is also condemned in contexts where believers are warned that they will not "inherit the kingdom" if they are thieves (1 Cor 6:9-10). Likewise, OT saints who violated the seventh commandment would not "inherit the kingdom". They had already entered it freely by faith in God on the night of the Passover (Exodus 12) but if they did not put this faith to work by working honestly they could not expect to inherit the kingdom. Entrance into the kingdom is a free gift conditioned on faith alone. Inheritance in the kingdom is a reward conditioned on obedience.

E. The Eighth Commandment (v 16): False Witness

¹⁶ "You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.

The commandment is to be honest and accurate in administering justice in everyday affairs, particularly in the courts. If one bears false witness then it unjustly ruins the reputations of others in society (committing perjury).

The NT parallel to not bear false witness is lying, although perjury is explicitly mentioned in 1 Tim 4:10. Believers should not lie or commit perjury but rather be honest. Eph 4:25 is quite clear, Since our old man was crucified at the moment of faith alone in Christ alone and our new man was put on at that time, therefore, we ought to lay “aside falsehood, SPEAK TRUTH EACH ONE *of you* WITH HIS NEIGHBOR, for we are members of one another.” The opposite of a liar is a truth teller. One is not a liar because he is not lying. One is not a liar only if he is a truth teller. The believer who practices lying will have his part, his fruit cast into the lake of fire (Rev 21:8)

F. The Ninth and Tenth Commandments (v 17): Coveting Neighbor's Wife and Coveting Neighbor's Property

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."

The explanation for why verse 17 contains two of the 10 Commandments comes from four evidences in the Dt 5:7-21 list. *First*, in verses 17-21 each commandment is separated by the Hebrew *waw* (“and”), “You shall not murder *and* you shall not commit adultery *and* you shall not steal *and* you shall not bear false witness *and* you shall not covet your neighbor’s wife *and* you shall not desire your neighbor’s house. Clearly the Hebrew *waw* intends to separate the last two commandments in the Deuteronomy list. Probably the same is true of the Exodus 20 list. *Second*, the dual use of the word “covet” in Exod 20:17 indicates that God wants us to see two commandments here, not just one. *Third*, to further clarify in Dt 5:21 God used the word “covet” (Heb. *chamad*) of the neighbors wife and the word “desire” (Heb. *avah*) of the neighbors house. This indicates that the two commands are different. *Lastly*, this cannot be one command because a wife was not considered property and laws concerning wives are distinct from laws concerning property.

Therefore, to get 10 commandments and not 11 verses 3-6 are considered as one commandment rather than two. That we know there are only 10 is because Exod 34:28 says there are 10.

Tradition	1st Commandment	2nd Commandment	9th Commandment	10th Commandment
Ancient Judaism, most Protestants & Eastern Orthodox	Exodus 20:3	Exodus 20:4-6	Exodus 20:16	Exodus 20:17
Current Judaism	Exodus 20:2	Exodus 20:3-6	Exodus 20:16	Exodus 20:17
Roman Catholics, some Lutherans	Exodus 20:3-6	Exodus 20:7	Coveting of neighbor's wife in Exodus 20:17	Rest of Exodus 20:17

Thus, if we interpret the Exodus list in light of the Deuteronomy list then verse 17 actually contains both the 9th and 10th commandments. The ninth commandment forbids “coveting” another man’s wife. The focus is on lustful covetousness. The 10th commandment forbids “desiring” another man’s property. This covers all other types of covetousness. Both of these commandments are unique in that they do not address external actions but the internal heart. “...it is even forbidden to desire in one’s heart another’s wife or property. Desire is the first step, liable to lead to the second—adultery, theft, and possibly even murder.”ⁱ It disturbs one’s spiritual peace, and must therefore be prohibited.

Both coveting another person’s property and another person’s spouse are condemned for the NT believer. Paul is the obvious example of the believer who covets. Romans 7 describes how Paul, although justified by faith was trying to be sanctified by the Law. Since salvation from beginning to end is through faith (Rom 1:16) then the Law cannot sanctify. Yet, the Law did reveal to him his covetousness and for this reason it showed him his sin which brought forth death. Therefore the Law is holy and good because it shows us how utterly sinful our sin is. However, it cannot sanctify, a believer can only be sanctified by faith which activates the Spirit’s work in the believer’s life (Romans 8). If it was any other way then salvation would begin by faith but would require works to be completed. Paul thanked God it was not this way because human effort obviously resulted in sin (Rom 7:24-25)!

Since coveting is an issue of the heart and the heart cannot be seen by men except by their words (Matt 12:32-37) then covert sins in our hearts that have yet to be revealed are being monitored by God. The mechanics of how sin is born is described in James 1:14-15.

James 1:14-16 But each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust. ¹⁵ Then when lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and when sin is accomplished, it brings forth death. ¹⁶ Do not be deceived, my beloved brethren.

Sin is parallel with a stillbirth here. First, we are deceived. This is the basic problem. We are deceived by false doctrine which ultimately leads to sin which brings forth death. So, we begin by being deceived because we have false doctrine. This leads to be enticed by our own lusts. Then we are tempted to act on that lust. When lust has conceived, that is, when we have decided to act on it then it inevitably gives birth to sin and when sin is accomplished it brings forth death. This is a covert or overt sin. Sin always starts with deception and always brings forth death. Death here is not eternal hell but separation from fellowship with God. Believer's can and do experience death in this life every time we sin because the wages of sin is death (Rom 6:23).

“The central thought in the first part is the love of the Lord—‘and you shall love the Lord your God’—‘and in the second, the love of man—‘but you shall love your neighbour as yourself.’”ⁱⁱ

III. REVIEW OF TEN COMMANDMENTS

The Ten Commandments were authored solely by God on the top of Mt Sinai in the year 1445-44BC. He etched them on two stone tablets small enough to be carried in Moses hand. They are the heart of the Torah and therefore reveal the heart of God. They are given in the form of *apodictic law*, that is, a positive or negative commandment (e.g. “You shall not steal”). Eight are negative and two are positive. They cover the basic areas of life:

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| 1. Worship | You shall have no other gods before Me. |
| 2. Respect | You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain |
| 3. Time | Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. (+) |
| 4. Authority | Honor your father and your mother (+) |
| 5. Life | You shall not murder |
| 6. Purity | You shall not commit adultery |
| 7. Property | You shall not steal |

8. Tongue You shall not bear false witness
9. Contentment You shall not desire your neighbor's house,
10. Lust You shall not covet your neighbor's wife

Each of the Ten Commandments expresses the general will of God for the individual Israelite. The details regarding each commandment follow in the form of *casuistic law*. The first three commandments were given for the individual Israelite to maintain fellowship with God. The last seven commandments were given for the individual Israelite to maintain fellowship with his fellow man. So, the Ten Commandments were not given to Israel as a way of redemption but rather as a way redeemed people could maintain fellowship. Redemption from Egypt was free but earning an inheritance required maintaining fellowship through personal obedience to God's commandments. If they were faithful then they would be rewarded with an inheritance in the kingdom. In Moses' generation only two individuals were faithful and earned an inheritance in the kingdom; Joshua and Caleb. While the rest of that generation entered the kingdom of God on the night of the Exodus they did not inherit the kingdom of God on the day of the Jordan crossing. The sole reason for not inheriting the kingdom was disobedience (Numb 20:24; Dt 4:21). Exodus 1-11 is a picture of the natural man. Exodus 12-Dt 34 is a picture of the carnal believer. Joshua 1-11 is a picture of the spiritual believer. Joshua 12-24 is a picture of the victorious believer.

Natural man	Carnal Christian	Spiritual Christian	Rewarded Christian
Egypt	Wilderness	Promised Land	
Exod 1-11	Exod 12-Dt 34	Josh 1-11	Josh 12-22
		Battle	Victory
In the World	Enter the Kingdom		Inherit the Kingdom

This whole scenario parallels the Church.ⁱⁱⁱ Nine commandments are condemned for the Church. Many of them are found in the lists of 1 Cor 6:9-10 and Gal 5:19-21. In both passages those who commit such sins will not "inherit the kingdom of God". From this many conclusions have been drawn. Normally, it is assumed that "inheriting the kingdom of God" means "entering the kingdom of God". If such is the case then entrance into the

kingdom of God is conditioned on faith and works. Many Calvinists and Arminian's make this fatal error in these passages. On one hand, the Calvinist errs by teaching that God guarantees a person's faith by regenerating them first (Irresistible Grace) and therefore He also guarantees their sanctification (Perseverance of the Saints). This ultimately means that a genuine believer will inevitably avoid these sins. Therefore, if he commits these sins it is evidence that he is not a genuine believer. This can only mean that God has not regenerated him. On the other hand, the Arminian errs by teaching that a genuine believer may commit these sins but if he does he will lose his salvation. If such is the case then entrance into the kingdom of God is conditioned on faith and works.

In the final analysis both Calvinism and Arminianism err in two respects. First, they contradict the NT teaching that there is only one condition for being regenerated and entering the kingdom of God: faith (cf John 1:14; 3:1-15). Second, they assume that inheriting the kingdom means entering the kingdom. Therefore, another solution should be sought.

If entering the kingdom is clearly conditioned on faith alone in Christ alone and inheriting the kingdom is conditioned upon not committing these sins then inheriting the kingdom cannot mean entering the kingdom. Either its faith alone in Christ alone or its faith alone + avoiding certain sins. But, both the OT and NT clearly teach that entering (*eiserchomai*) the kingdom and inheriting (*kleronomia*) the kingdom are two different concepts. Moses generation entered the kingdom at the Exodus from Egypt but only Joshua and Caleb inherited the kingdom by crossing the Jordan.

In our text, believers who commit these sins will enter the kingdom because they have expressed faith alone in Christ alone but they will not inherit the kingdom because they do not have obedience. To inherit means "to share in" "to possess" "to have an inheritance" in the kingdom. So, inheritance is a reward for the faithful, obedient believers like Joshua and Caleb who go to battle and are victorious (see previous diagram). In the NT, victorious believers are given "victory" crowns, crowns are given to kings and kings rule. So, to inherit the kingdom includes being rewarded with thrones from which to co-reign with Christ in His kingdom. Thus, while unfaithful believers will be residents in the kingdom, faithful believers will co-reign with Christ in the kingdom. This clears up the contradictions created by Arminian and Calvinistic theological errors. These passages are not warning against loss of salvation (Arminianism) or against mere profession of Christ (Calvinism) but against loss of reward (Free Grace).

Galatians 5:19-21 clearly teaches that a genuine Christian still has the sin nature and can therefore still commit murder, adultery, theft, idolatry, etc...A person does not lose their sin nature at the moment they become a Christian. Rather, a Christian is freed from the penalty of sin which is eternal condemnation and from the power of sin over their lives. A Christian no longer has to sin. Instead, a Christian can choose to obey or disobey God's commandments. Neither the Calvinist or Arminian interpretation is biblical. A partial solution to the four hundred year debate is that a genuine believer may commit these sins but if he does he will lose his reward. Salvation is a gift of God conditioned on faith in Christ. Rewards are earned and conditioned on obedience to Christ. Confusing salvation and rewards passages is mixing apples with oranges. Paul is warning Christian's to walk by the Spirit and not by the flesh because there are repercussions in the believer's quality of life in the millennial kingdom.

ⁱ Cassuto, 249.

ⁱⁱ Cassuto, 249.

ⁱⁱⁱ Nine of the Ten Commandments are repeated in some form in the NT. The only one not repeated in any form is the third commandment regarding the Sabbath. We may regard one day above another or every day alike (Rom 14:5). To judge a fellow brother for his conviction regarding this matter is sinful.

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