

Deuteronomy 5:17-22 **Learning Vicariously - Hopefully! Part II**

We only evaluated five of the Ten Commandments last week, and we saw rather clearly how Israel failed at meeting them. Today, we'll look at the last five, and consider them in relation to Israel as well. And in doing so, we can consider them in relation to our own actions also. In fact, we would be stupid to not do so.

God has a standard, and that standard must be met. Even if we – meaning the people of the world apart from Israel – are not under law, we still have to meet God's standard of perfection. As we are born in sin, that won't be possible. But we can learn from Israel's failure that – just as they needed something more – we need Jesus.

It is He who embodies this law, and it is He who can impute the righteousness of it to us because He came under the law, He lived it out perfectly, and He died in fulfillment of it. And so, what He did is not only available to those of Israel, it is available to all who call out to Him in faith.

Text Verse: “And now the LORD says,
Who formed Me from the womb *to be* His Servant,
To bring Jacob back to Him,
So that Israel is gathered to Him
(For I shall be glorious in the eyes of the LORD,
And My God shall be My strength),
⁶Indeed He says,
'It is too small a thing that You should be My Servant
To raise up the tribes of Jacob,
And to restore the preserved ones of Israel;
I will also give You as a light to the Gentiles,
That You should be My salvation to the ends of the earth.’” Isaiah 49:5, 6

Israel thought, and they still think, they are the sole focus of God's attention, and yet, Isaiah showed them that this wasn't so. But

consider it. Israel had the law. The nations of the earth did not. If this is so, and it clearly is, then it cannot be that the Servant of the Lord was coming to save Israel *because* of the law. Rather, He came to save them *despite* the law, and – yes – even *from* the law.

If He was going to “restore the preserved ones of Israel,” it had to be because of something other than the law. All of Israel had the law, and neither Israel collectively, nor any of Israel individually, was obedient to the law.

If people could just read the word properly, and from its intended perspective – meaning as given to us by God to show us the story of redemption – we could then put the law in its proper place. And, we could put Israel in her proper place. But in failing to do so, we mess both up, and the story of redemption – very quickly – becomes about us and about our efforts. Let’s not make this mistake. Or, if we already have, let us not continue to do so.

God’s story of the redemption of mankind is marvelous. And, it all centers on one Person – Jesus Christ. If we can keep that in mind, we will be in the sweet spot. Such glorious truths are to be found in His superior word. And so, let us turn to that precious word once again and... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. I’ve Never Done That! (verses 17 & 18)

¹⁷ ‘You shall not murder.

lo tresakh – “no you shall murder.” It is an identical match to Exodus 20:13.

The sixth word. Like the majority of the other commands, this one begins with an absolute negation, *lo*, or “no.” What follows then is utterly forbidden.

As we saw last week, these Ten Commandments are divided up by scholars in various ways. Some see them as logically dividing between commands 1-4 and then 5-10. The first four showing love for God, the last six showing love for neighbor.

Others divide them 1-5 and 6-10. This would then show a distinction between filial and fraternal matters. The first five show obedience to the parent as children, the latter, respect for others. Either way, as parents are the image of God to the child until the child can reason out who God is, then the fifth commandment is an excellent transition verse for either of these views.

In our interpersonal relationships, this sixth command, you shall not murder, is given because it respects the very life of those we are to love as ourselves. And, because this command deals with interpersonal relationships, it also deals with our duties to God directly as well.

Genesis 1:26 tells us that man is made in the image of God. As this is so, then an attack against God's image-bearer is, therefore, an implicit attack against the One whose image he possesses.

As this is so, murder is not something that can simply be dismissed as merely being on a human level. It is rightfully considered an attack against God. But this command is still rightly considered under the precept of loving one's neighbor.

The word *ratsakh*, or murder, was introduced into the Bible at the giving of the Ten Commandments in Exodus 20. When we evaluated that, I cited Albert Barnes, who said, "This properly denotes taking the life of another with malice, or with an intention to murder him. The Jews understood it as meaning no more."

That must be amended. It is true that it speaks of intentional taking of life with malice, but it is incorrect that this was understood “as meaning no more.” In Numbers 35, the same word, *ratsakh*, was used time and again concerning the manslayer – regardless as to whether the killing was intentional or unintentional.

Therefore, the word is better defined as “the unsanctioned taking of human life.” The command itself is certainly referring to the intentional slaying of another, but the word extends to accidental slaying of another.

Thus, there was the need for cities of refuge to be designated in order to protect those who did take life without sanction, but who did so without malice. To get a fuller and more detailed understanding of this, one should really go watch the Numbers 35 sermon which details these things.

Having now understood this, we can see that translating this sixth command as “kill,” rather than “murder,” as the KJV does, can only confuse the meaning.

Elsewhere, the Bible mandates that capital offenders such as murderers *are* to be executed. Further, the killing of another in battle is considered sanctioned killing. Therefore, using the word “kill” instead of “murder” here has led to both a misunderstanding of the intent of the command and a misuse of it against what the law actually prescribes in the execution of offenders or towards soldiers who are legally engaging in warfare.

Because of such a faulty translation, this has even been stretched to imply by some the nonsensical idea that the killing of animals is wrong. This is a complete misuse of the command. In Exodus 12:21, the people were told to “kill the Passover.”

Since then, a jillion times the Bible has spoken of slaughtering animals for both sacrificial and personal uses. Those verses always use entirely different words than the one used here.

As just noted, using the word “kill” here would set up other contradictions in the Bible. Israel has been and will be instructed to destroy certain people groups in battle. These instances are not to be considered as *ratsakh*, or “murder.” When in Exodus 20, we cited the Pulpit Commentary who said concerning this precept –

“The Israelites are told that to take life is a crime. God forbids it. As usual, no exceptions are made. Exceptions appear later on; but the first thing is to establish the principle.” Pulpit Commentary

That was and is incorrect. Exceptions, which *precede* the giving of the law, already existed. In Exodus 17, the Lord told Moses, “Choose us some men and go out, fight with Amalek.” After that, it said, “So Joshua defeated Amalek and his people with the edge of the sword.”

The incident predated the law. Therefore, a distinction is made between “killing” and “murder.” The word “kill” is far too broadly rendered, and thus it is a most unfortunate translation. It ignores both previous precedent, and it contradicts later instruction and refinement.

It is noted that all known codes of societal conduct include this precept, either implicitly or explicitly. It is also a precept which predates the law as well. In Genesis 9, after the flood of Noah, the Lord said to Noah –

“Whoever sheds man’s blood,
By man his blood shall be shed;
For in the image of God
He made man.” Genesis 9:6

The willful, intentional murder of another human is forbidden. In order for us to know our own hearts, and the depravity found there – a depravity which is universal in man, we can learn vicariously from Israel about what our own inclinations are.

Israel failed in this command, both individually and collectively, throughout their history. King David, the beloved of the Lord and Israel's sweet psalmist, violated this precept when he had the husband of Bathsheba murdered. Likewise, the people as a whole, on several occasions, are noted for their murders –

“Hear the word of the LORD, O children of Israel,
for the LORD has a controversy with the inhabitants of the land.
There is no faithfulness or steadfast love,
and no knowledge of God in the land;
² there is swearing, lying, **murder**, stealing, and committing adultery;
they break all bounds, and bloodshed follows bloodshed.” Hosea 4:1, 2
(ESV)

The law was given to show us God's perfect standard. Israel failed in meeting that standard. Concerning this sixth word, something else was needed. The sixth word only condemns; it cannot save.

¹⁸ ‘You shall not commit adultery.

v'lo tneph – “And not shall you commit adultery.” Very few translations get this verse right. Unlike the Seventh Commandment of Exodus 20:14, which says, “You shall not commit adultery,” this one says, “And, you shall not commit adultery.” The KJV paraphrases it by saying, “Neither shall you commit adultery.”

The seventh word. The word *naaph*, which was introduced into scripture in the giving of the Ten Commandments, deals with literal adultery, but it is also used figuratively in the sense of apostatizing from true faith in the Lord.

As with other commands, this one is in the absolute negation, beginning with *v'lo* or “And no.” John Lange noted an interesting connection between the first and second command and the sixth and seventh command –

“This commandment holds the same relation to the sixth as the second to the first. Idolatry proper[ly] corresponds with the murder of one’s neighbor, the latter being an offence against the divine in man. Image-worship, however, corresponds with adultery, as this too rests on a subtle deification of the image of man; it is spiritual idolatry, as image-worship is spiritual adultery.”
John Lange

And so, following the prohibition against murder, the respecting of the bonds of marriage is highlighted. The act of adultery is a violation of the sanctity of marriage and is as if an invasion has been made upon the household.

When a contract of marriage is made, adultery dissolves the intent behind the contract. The offended party no longer has the ability to trust that any other part of that contract applies. This act is so universally accepted as wrong that almost every society known to man has, at one time or another, laws against it and punishments, up to death, associated with those laws.

Only in a society of moral decay and increasing wickedness is this sin considered as acceptable. But in God’s eyes, the command remains in force as much today as when it was first given. And in the case of the Bible, the further defining of adultery will show that this is not just a sin targeted against the woman, but the man as well. For example, Leviticus 20 says -

“The man who commits adultery with *another* man’s wife, *he* who commits adultery with his neighbor’s wife, the adulterer and the adulteress, shall surely be put to death.” Leviticus 20:10

In taking another man's wife, the offender has failed to honor and love his neighbor. For his willful act against God and man, he was to be executed along with the woman.

As the word *naaph*, or adultery, was used for the first time in Exodus 20, it is a good time to consider that until a command is given, there can be no imputation of sin.

It is certain that many people had committed adultery before the giving of the command, but there could be no imputation of sin for the act. Paul explains this in Romans 5 –

“Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned—¹³ (For until the law sin was in the world, but sin is not imputed when there is no law.”
Romans 5:12, 13

What this means is that from the time the command was given, any committing of adultery carried with it the imputation of sin, and thus guilt. As Paul notes later in Romans 7 –

“I was alive once without the law, but when the commandment came, sin revived and I died.¹⁰ And the commandment, which *was* to *bring* life, I found to *bring* death.¹¹ For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it killed *me*.¹² Therefore the law *is* holy, and the commandment holy and just and good.” Romans 7:9-12

Paul is specifically speaking about any command which is given. For whatever reason a command is given, because of our failure to meet the requirements of it, death is the result. This is what occurred in the Garden of Eden. Man was given one command, and it was in the negative –

“Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat;¹⁷ but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.” Genesis 2:16, 17

Had the Lord not given Adam this command, when Adam ate of the fruit, there could have been no imputation of sin. But because the command existed, sin was imputed. Now consider again, before the command to not commit adultery existed, there could be no imputation of sin for the act.

But from the time the command was spoken forth, any act of adultery would result in the imputation of the sin. As we continue to see, the law does not bring life, it only brings death. It shows us how utterly sinful sin is to God. When a violation occurs, we stand condemned because of our misdeed.

But more, Jesus the Lord, who gave the command to Israel, further explained it to them when He came and taught among them –

“You have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not commit adultery.’²⁸ But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart.” Matthew 5:27, 28

Can anyone of us say that we have fulfilled this law in the manner He set forth? Of course not! But even without Jesus’ further explanation of it, we can consider Israel in relation to the command.

Was Israel free from guilt concerning this commandment? The answer is a definite “No!” Like murder, Hosea 4 shows that the people of the land reveled in sin, including the sin of adultery –

“Hear the word of the LORD,
You children of Israel,
For the LORD *brings* a charge against the inhabitants of the land:
“There is no truth or mercy
Or knowledge of God in the land.
² By swearing and lying,
Killing and stealing and committing **adultery**,
They break all restraint,
With bloodshed upon bloodshed.” Hosea 4:1, 2

But Israel was even guiltier because they were told that not only was adultery to be considered a sin of the flesh against one's fellow man, it was also a sin when committed against God. The prophets, time and time again, told the people that when they bowed to other gods, they committed *spiritual* adultery against the Lord.

And throughout the Old Testament, the people are shown to have committed exactly this against Him. They had forsaken their Husband and gone after others. They had violated the marriage contract that He established with them in the giving of the law; the law that they agreed to.

We can learn vicariously from Israel by paying heed to both the law and to Israel's inability to keep the law – even one point of it. The record of their history is one of abject failure. But Israel is simply given as an example of all people in all cultures.

As is evidenced throughout Israel's history, concerning this seventh word, something else was needed. The seventh word only condemns; it cannot save.

As an extra note, repeated from our Exodus 20 sermon on this command – it is not true that Jesus abrogated it when he had mercy on the adulteress in John 8. The law demanded that she was to be stoned for her crime. When He was asked for His guidance, the response He gave has been often twisted to justify tolerance in the matter –

“He who is without sin among you, let him throw a stone at her first.”⁸ And again He stooped down and wrote on the ground.⁹ Then those who heard *it*, being convicted by *their* conscience, went out one by one, beginning with the oldest *even* to the last. And Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst.¹⁰ When Jesus had raised Himself up and saw no one but the woman, He said to her, 'Woman, where are those accusers of yours? Has no one condemned you?'

¹¹ She said, ‘No one, Lord.’

And Jesus said to her, ‘Neither do I condemn you...’” John 8:7-11

If that were the end of the account, which is often where the morally deficient leave off with it, then we may come to a different conclusion about the matter. However, there were a few more words to her before He finished. He said, “...go and sin no more” (John 7:11) What is implied is that Jesus called her actions sinful and that she was to not continue in her sin.

*Murder, me? No, I've never done that
Only bad people do that kind of stuff
I've said some mean things though, during an angry spat
But calling that murder, it's just not enough*

*Adultery? No! I've never strayed from my wife
She's so good to me; I just stay at home
Sure, I think about the girl at the store every day of my life
But,,, nope! Never from my wife did I roam*

*Wait, I never noticed this before...
The Bible says whoever hates his brother, a murderer is he
And he who looks at a woman in lust, is an adulterer for sure
I've done both of those things... O! Woe is me!*

*Because of this law, I'm digging an awful deep hole
A pit which is set to consume my very soul*

II. Offenses Abound (verses 19 & 20)

¹⁹ ‘You shall not steal.

v'lo tgenov – “And no you shall steal.” Once again, unlike Exodus 20:15, the word “And” begins the verse. Other than that, it is identical.

The eighth word. This commandment corresponds to the third. In the making of, and bowing down to, carved images we in essence rob God of His just due. Likewise, when we steal from others, we deny them of what they have a right to. In this, we can see that the structure of the commands is not arbitrary. Instead, it is precise and purposeful.

The word *ganav* means to carry away, secretly bring, steal away, or get by stealth. What is obvious is that something is being removed in an improper fashion. The word was used several times before the giving of the law. It is what Rachel did when she stole her father's household idols.

It is also what the brothers of Joseph denied doing when they had been accused of taking his cup used for divination. In both of these instances, and in the giving of the command itself, there is the implied concept of "personal property."

The Bible takes this precept as an axiom and then solidifies it in this command. People have a right to their possessions. To unjustly deprive them of what they own is theft.

In the pre-law biblical references, in the moral guidelines of civilized culture, and even in the simple knowledge of right and wrong instilled in man, the concept that stealing is wrong is testified to.

In our Exodus 20 sermon, I cited Charles Ellicott's analysis of this command. It is worth citing again –

"Here, again, law has but embodied natural instinct. The savage who hammers out a flint knife by repeated blows with a pebble, labouring long, and undergoing pain in the process, feels that the implement which he has made is his own, and that his right to it is indisputable. If he is deprived of it by force or fraud, he is wronged. The eighth commandment forbids this

wrong, and requires us to respect the property of others no less than their person and their domestic peace and honour.” Charles Ellicott

It would be hard to argue that the flint knife made by that man belonged to anyone but him. And yet, the one who is stronger, thus the one in power – whether he has earned the right to it or not – will come and rob what is not his.

This is what governments do all the time. But just because the government has the *ability* to take away one’s personal possessions, it does not mean that it is *morally right* for them to do so. This is why there is a divide in this matter. On one side, there are conservatives, and on the other, there are liberals.

Conservatives hold that one who earns his keep should retain it. Liberals hold that the shiftless, who do nothing to earn their keep, should be entitled to take from those who have earned it. This is what divides the two in this regard, and it comes down to that one word – power.

When liberals are in power, they pass laws which benefit their own personal agenda at the expense of the efforts of the private individual. This is theft. At what point something which is good for all, such as proper taxation for the continuance of the government, becomes theft may be debatable, but such a point does exist.

Unfortunately, by the time that point is passed, and normally by the way it comes about, there is nothing that the individual can do about it. Adam Clarke rightly states it this way –

“Crimes are not lessened in their demerit by the number, or political importance of those who commit them. A state that enacts bad laws is as criminal before God as the individual who breaks good ones.” Adam Clarke

He is right and it shows the immense guilt of those in power, especially the left, who steal from the rich to give to the poor. Albert Barnes notes that, “The right of property is sanctioned in the eighth commandment by an external rule: its deeper meaning is involved in the tenth commandment.”

The idea that the deeper meaning of the tenth commandment, meaning coveting, is affected by the right to private property is beautifully seen in the account of King Ahab and the vineyard of Naboth in 1 Kings 21.

He coveted Naboth’s vineyard, he had others lie in order to bring accusation against him, and he then had him murdered because of the lie. After that, he stole the property that was left. The violation of one command often results in the violation of several.

Reading about Ahab, and indeed other such accounts like it from the Old Testament, helps us to learn vicariously of what is right and proper, and of what is dastardly. The record is there, if we will just pick it up and read it.

But in reading the word, we not only see the acts committed, but we also see how the Lord takes note of each instance. In Jeremiah 7, we read this –

“““Will you **steal**, murder, commit adultery, swear falsely, burn incense to Baal, and walk after other gods whom you do not know, ¹⁰ and *then* come and stand before Me in this house which is called by My name, and say, ‘We are delivered to do all these abominations’? ¹¹ Has this house, which is called by My name, become a den of thieves in your eyes? Behold, I, even I, have seen *it*,’ says the LORD.””” Jeremiah 7:9-11

As with the previous seven words, Israel proved that the law of the Lord only brought guilt. Sin was imputed for their thefts because the law had instructed them that they were to not steal. Concerning

this eighth word, something else was needed. The eighth word only condemns; it cannot save.

²⁰ ‘You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.

v’lo ta’aneh bereakha ed shav – “And no you shall bear in your neighbor witness empty.” There are two differences here from Exodus 20:16. The first is that this, again, begins with “And.” Secondly, the word false is now changed from *sheqer* to *shav*.

The word *sheqer* signifies an untruth, and by implication a sham or something without cause or justification. The word here, *shav*, signifies deception or vanity, or that which is empty. It is the word used in Exodus 20:7 –

“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**.” Exodus 20:7

That was repeated here in Deuteronomy 5:11 with the verses that correspond to the Exodus account. It was also used in Exodus 23 concerning circulating a false report.

The ninth word. In Psalm 12, David says –

“Help, LORD, for the godly man ceases!

For the faithful disappear from among the sons of men.

²They speak **idly** everyone with his neighbor;

With flattering lips *and* a double heart they speak.” Psalm 12:1, 2

It is a word used quite a bit by David and others in the psalms and elsewhere, and in various applications, but it is always in a negative way. When the Lord speaks, there is purpose, there is substance behind what He says, and what is said is then enduring.

To speak words without substance is a lie. One could speak empty words about himself – “I was a navy seal.” It is harmful because it deprives those who were actually navy seals of the efforts they expended to earn that title. This would then, in a sense, be bearing false witness against one’s neighbor.

One can also obviously speak empty words directly about his neighbor, harming him in the process as well. In this, he can reduce the person’s stature in the eyes of others, call into question his integrity, and so on. In Isaiah 59, we read –

“For your hands are defiled with blood,
And your fingers with iniquity;
Your lips have spoken lies, (*sheqer*)
Your tongue has muttered perversity.
⁴No one calls for justice,
Nor does *any* plead for truth.
They trust in empty words and speak **lies**; (*shav*)
They conceive evil and bring forth iniquity.” Isaiah 59:3, 4

In his words, Isaiah uses both words given in the two sets of Ten Commandments, *sheqer* and *shav*. In the Greek translation of this from Isaiah, the words signify lawless and empty, which are pretty close to the intent.

Whether they are direct untruths, or words of emptiness, speaking something that is nothing – and thus an untruth – violates the neighbor, and it disgraces the Lord who is perfectly true in His very being.

In fact, in the book of Titus, it explicitly says that God cannot lie. Because this is His very nature, He is asking us to resemble Him by always testifying to the truth. Further, this was given as a protection of the people. To speak either direct untruths or simply words of vanity against another does nothing to enrich the speaker, but it robs much from the one spoken against.

Not bearing false witness against a neighbor includes a whole multitude of things. We can deprive another of his right to life or property by making false claims. We can slander others, tell false tales about them, or even imply that they have committed a wrong which they have not committed.

But more, we can suppress the truth when it is known in order to harm our neighbor. That must be considered a violation of this command.

Finally, the term “neighbor” here is to be given the broadest application. It doesn’t mean “next door,” but anyone in any location. And it doesn’t stop with friends, but it extends to enemies. It must be considered an all-inclusive reference to humanity in general.

So far, we have seen that the first eight commandments could not save anyone. The people failed, and the Bible witnesses against them. Now, this ninth commandment does so as well. If we pay heed, and learn vicariously that this is so, we can see that the standard also speaks against us.

Israel is given as the example, we are to learn from it, and we are to reach out for grace. If we don’t, we can see that we will be lost. The law was given, and it was disobeyed. Israel failed to uphold even this basic commandment. Harm was done to others, the Lord was offended through their actions, and judgment for violating the words of the covenant was due.

Once again, the law which had been given resulted not in man’s blissful reconciliation with God, but rather in the imputation of sin. Concerning this ninth word, something else was needed. The ninth word only condemns; it cannot save.

*Steal? Me? No, I never did such a thing
Everything I have I earned on my own
Such an accusation, well, it makes my ears ring
All the food I have, comes from what I have grown*

*And bear false witness? Come on, not a chance
I never say anything that isn't true
My words are like a perfectly choreographed dance
It's the truth! Why would I lie to you?*

*Well, yeah, I did take that kid's toy back in first grade
And I did say things about some people that just weren't true
It's just a couple little mistakes that I've made
God doesn't care... it's all past. On a bell curve, I'm a lot better than you*

III. A Sin of the Heart (verses 21 & 22)

²¹ 'You shall not covet your neighbor's wife; and you shall not desire your neighbor's house, his field, his male servant, his female servant, his ox, his donkey, or anything that is your neighbor's.'

Again, there are differences between these words, and of those in Exodus 20:17. The verse begins, again, with "And" in the Hebrew. From there the things Moses names are listed differently than they were before –

Deuteronomy 5

Neighbor's wife

Neighbor's house

His field

And his manservant

And his maidservant

His ox

And his donkey

And all that is your neighbor's

Exodus 20

House of neighbor

Wife of neighbor

And his manservant

And his maidservant

And his ox

And his donkey

And all that is your neighbor's

The wife is placed first before house, and “field” is added. That is obvious. But, there is another difference as well. In Exodus 20, the word *khamad* or desire, coming from a root meaning “to delight in,” is used twice when speaking of all of the items.

However, here in Deuteronomy, Moses uses the word *khamad* only when referring to the neighbor’s wife, and then for the rest of the items, he changes to the word *avah* – to desire, crave, or lust after.

Both words are used negatively and positively throughout Scripture. Therefore, to have these feelings is not necessarily wrong. Rather, it is wrong when those feelings are transferred to something to which an individual has no right.

To understand the changes, the most obvious change – that of adding the field of the neighbor – should be considered. The standard reason given by most scholars is that Israel is about to enter the land of Canaan, and so Moses adds it in.

That doesn’t make sense. Israel was expected to go in and possess the land forty years earlier as well. They were to possess houses and fields. Further, some of Israel had already been given their inheritance east of the Jordan. So that cannot be the reason.

One reason for this is certainly *because* some of them had already received their land. They were to be content with what they had been allotted now that they had their possession.

Secondly, and a little more spiritual, is that seven is the number of spiritual perfection. God originally listed seven items. Now seven items are considered under the house, just as it was in Exodus 20, but the wife is elevated above the house, making an eighth – the number of superabundance, new beginnings, and that of a new series. Each of these fits right in with the thought of Israel now obtaining the promise that they had missed 38 years earlier.

As for the addition of the new word, *avah*. This is given to dispel the lies one might tell himself about his own heart – “Well, I desired his field, but I didn’t lust after it.” Moses is destroying the argument of semantics. He is saying that what you look at, if it is not yours, is not to be salivated over by twenty drops off of your lip, and not by even one drop off of your lip. This is...

The tenth word. As I said, elsewhere in the Bible, the same words are used in a positive sense, such as in the 19th Psalm, where David uses *khamad* –

“The judgments of the LORD *are* true *and* righteous altogether.
¹⁰ **More to be desired** *are they* than gold,
Yea, than much fine gold;
Sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb.” Psalm 19:9-10

Later, Isaiah uses the word *avah* –

“With my soul I have desired You in the night,
Yes, by my spirit within me I will seek You early;
For when Your judgments *are* in the earth,
The inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness.” Isaiah 26:9

Therefore, the desiring of a thing is not in and of itself wrong. It is desiring a wrong thing, or desiring something in an unhealthy way, which violates this commandment. What is most important about this tenth commandment is that it is solely of intent, and thus we learn that the Lord is aware of our intent.

The Bible says nothing is hidden from the eyes of the Lord and here we have an explicit reference to that. What we covet, unless acted upon, remains in our heads alone. And yet it is not unknown to the Lord.

And though this commandment is one solely of *intent*, it is that very intent which can so easily lead to disaster. The first two uses of the word *khamad* in the Bible are found right at the beginning of it all. Just after forming the man, and even before the Bible records any words having been spoken to him, we read this, which includes the word *khamad* –

“And out of the ground the LORD God made every tree grow **that is pleasant** to the sight and good for food. The tree of life *was* also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.” Genesis 2:9

After this, man was given his single command -

“Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; ¹⁷ but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.” Genesis 2:16-17

However, on the next page comes the most unfortunate of verses which uses this same word, *khamad* -

“So when the woman saw that the tree *was* good for food, that it *was* pleasant to the eyes, and a tree **desirable** to make *one* wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate.” Genesis 3:6

The lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life all stepped in and took hold of the first people who existed. They coveted that which was forbidden, and the world was plunged into darkness, pain, and death.

And the same is true with the word *avah*. Its first two uses were after the giving of the Ten Commandments, and while the people were on their way to Canaan –

“Now the mixed multitude who were among them yielded **to intense craving**; so the children of Israel also wept again and said: ‘Who will give us meat to eat?’” Numbers 11:4

After that, we read –

“But while the meat *was* still between their teeth, before it was chewed, the wrath of the LORD was aroused against the people, and the LORD struck the people with a very great plague. ³⁴ So he called the name of that place Kibroth Hattaavah, because there they buried the people **who had yielded to craving.**” Numbers 11:33, 34

So much for semantics. When we desire more than what the Lord offers us, we fall into sin. The thing which seems so innocuous and so relatively unimportant compared to all the rest of the commandments is that which causes the greatest of troubles.

And what is equally surprising is that the first command ever broken, and the first command that was violated just after Israel’s departure from Sinai – both of these examples – started with the last of the Ten Commandments. And each time, it resulted in death!

As this reflects an evaluation of the inner being of man, and the Lord is He who searches the hearts and the minds, then who can say they stand guiltless before God? Can Israel? The answer is, of course, “No.” From the time of the giving of the law, until the very last pages of the Old Testament, Scripture is *replete* with the failure of both individuals and the collective whole to meet the demands of this inward test.

In Numbers 11, the congregation craved after meat; in Joshua 7, Achan the son of Carmi coveted the plunder of Jericho; in 2 Samuel 11, David coveted another man’s wife; in 1 Kings 21, Ahab coveted another man’s vineyard, and in Micah 2 we read this about the people -

“Woe to those who devise iniquity,
And work out evil on their beds!
At morning light they practice it,
Because it is in the power of their hand.

² They **covet** fields and take *them* by violence,
Also houses, and seize *them*.
So they oppress a man and his house,
A man and his inheritance.” Micah 2:1, 2

As with all of the previous commandments, Israel *failed*. The word of God stands as a testimony against them and as a means for us to vicariously learn how far short of God’s standard we actually come.

Concerning this tenth word, something else was needed. The tenth word only condemns, it cannot save. The law itself says that the man who does the things of the law will live by them. But then the rest of the Old Testament goes on to show that no one could do the things of the law.

²² “These words the LORD spoke to all your assembly,

This means “The Ten Words,” meaning the Ten Commandments. The changes between Exodus and Deuteronomy cannot be taken as either errors or contradictions. The Lord presented the Ten to Israel, and Moses repeated the Ten to them.

^{22 (con’t)} in the mountain from the midst of the fire, the cloud, and the thick darkness, with a loud voice;

These words confirm what was already said in verse 4:11, and 4:12. Verse 4:11 describes the scene, and verse 4:12 notes that the Lord spoke out of the midst of the fire.

^{22 (con’t)} and He added no more.

This is only speaking of the verbal presentation to the people, not additional words of law. The Lord spoke out the Ten Words in the terrifying way to the people, and then He ceased from speaking.

After that, He only spoke to and through Moses, and later at times to Aaron, words of law.

*22 (fin) And He wrote them on two tablets of stone and gave them to me.

This actually occurred later. Moses went up the mountain to receive the tablets. While there, he also received a great deal of instruction over the next forty days. At the end of that time, as was seen in Exodus 34, and as will be seen again in Deuteronomy 9, he was then given the tablets of stone.

As we know, Israel turned from the Lord *while* he was on the mountain, and the first set of tablets were destroyed by Moses. It pictured Israel's failure to meet the law that they had just received. A second set of tablets was made, and these were deposited within the Ark of the Covenant, picturing Christ who both fulfilled and embodies the law.

It is only through what He accomplished that the life God promised to restore to man can be obtained. We have gone through ten basic commandments, and we have seen that Israel violated all of them – openly and as is clearly recorded.

This is for us to learn through them that what we need is less of the law and more of God's grace. When we arrogantly stand on the law for our justification, we tell God that we can do better than He has done. Let us never stand in such an unfavorable light. Rather, let us rush to Christ, receive His forgiveness, and be reconciled to God through Him.

Think of it! As the Lord's voice bellowed out each commandment, He was looking forward to the penalty for each violation of it, knowing that He would someday assume that penalty for us. The display of judgment that accompanied these Ten Words was taken

upon Himself... for us, and the cup of God's wrath was drained at the cross of Calvary. Thank God for Jesus Christ.

Closing Verse: "And He was withdrawn from them about a stone's throw, and He knelt down and prayed, ⁴² saying, 'Father, if it is Your will, take this cup away from Me; nevertheless not My will, but Yours, be done.'

⁴³Then an angel appeared to Him from heaven, strengthening Him. ⁴⁴ And being in agony, He prayed more earnestly. Then His sweat became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground.'" Luke 22:41-44

Next Week: Deuteronomy 5:23-33 It's a good question, and you surely wonder why... (Now, Therefore, Why Should We Die?) (22nd Deuteronomy Sermon)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you. He has a good plan and purpose for you. But He also has expectations of you as He prepares you for entrance into His Land of Promise. So, follow Him and trust Him and He will do marvelous things for you and through you.

Learning Vicariously - Hopefully! Part II

¹⁷ 'You shall not murder.

¹⁸ 'You shall not commit adultery.

¹⁹ 'You shall not steal.

²⁰ 'You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.

²¹ 'You shall not covet your neighbor's wife; and you shall not desire your neighbor's house, his field, his male servant, his female servant, his ox, his donkey, or anything that *is* your neighbor's.'

These words the LORD spoke to all your assembly
In the mountain from the midst of the fire, like a roar
The cloud, and the thick darkness, with a loud voice
And He added no more

And He wrote them on two tablets of stone
And gave them to me, when I was with Him alone

Lord God, turn our hearts to be obedient to Your word
Give us wisdom to be ever faithful to You

May we carefully heed each thing we have heard
Yes, Lord God may our hearts be faithful and true

And we shall be content and satisfied in You alone
We will follow You as we sing our songs of praise
Hallelujah to You; to us Your path You have shown
Hallelujah we shall sing to You for all of our days

Hallelujah and Amen...

¹⁷ ‘You shall not murder.

¹⁸ ‘You shall not commit adultery.

¹⁹ ‘You shall not steal.

²⁰ ‘You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.

²¹ ‘You shall not covet your neighbor’s wife; and you shall not desire your neighbor’s house, his field, his male servant, his female servant, his ox, his donkey, or anything that *is* your neighbor’s.’

²² “These words the LORD spoke to all your assembly, in the mountain from the midst of the fire, the cloud, and the thick

darkness, with a loud voice; and He added no more. And He wrote them on two tablets of stone and gave them to me.