

The image features two large, stone tablets with Hebrew text, representing the Ten Commandments. They are set in a vibrant, colorful landscape with a rainbow in the sky and a waterfall in the foreground. The sky is a mix of blue, orange, and pink, suggesting a sunrise or sunset. The waterfall is cascading over rocks, and the overall scene is bright and hopeful.

the
REFORMATION
herald

Vol. 55, No. 1

*Christ-centered
Commandments:*

TEN MAGNIFICENT PROMISES

Experiencing the New Covenant / Loving Loyalty / Honestly Content

the REFORMATION *herald*

Volume 55, Number 1

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"The age in which we live calls for reformatory action."
—Testimonies, vol. 4, p. 488.

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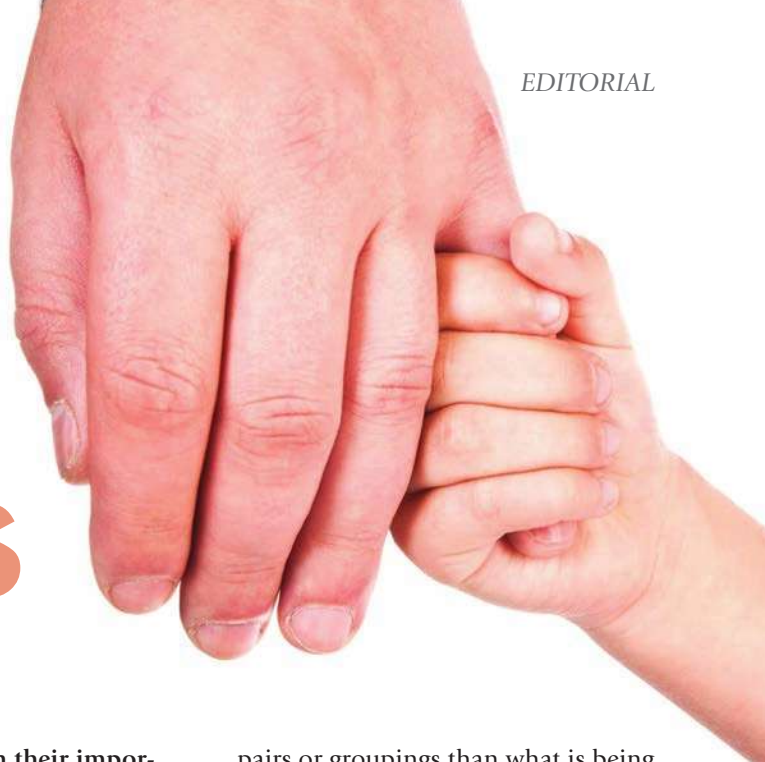
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10 Promises

The inspired psalmist pours out his heart in a sublimely powerful testimony: "My soul

breaketh for the longing that it hath unto thy judgments at all times. Thou hast rebuked the proud that are cursed, which do err from thy commandments. Remove from me reproach and contempt; for I have kept thy testimonies. Princes also did sit and speak against me: but thy servant did meditate in thy statutes. Thy testimonies also are my delight and my counsellors. . . . Thy commandment is exceeding broad. O how love I thy law! it is my meditation all the day" (Psalm 119:20–24, 96, 97).

Why was the psalmist so glad to meditate on God's law all day long?

"The ten commandments, Thou shalt, and Thou shalt not, are ten promises, assured to us if we render obedience to the law governing the universe. . . .

"That law of ten precepts of the greatest love that can be presented to man is the voice of God from heaven speaking to the soul in promise, 'This do, and you will not come under the dominion and control of Satan.' There is not a negative in that law, although it may appear thus. It is DO, and Live."¹

"We should study the divine precepts and seek to comprehend their depth. We should meditate upon

them until we discern their importance and immutability. We should study the life of our Redeemer, for He is the only perfect example for men. We should contemplate the infinite sacrifice of Calvary and behold the exceeding sinfulness of sin and the righteousness of the law. You will come from a concentrated study of the theme of redemption strengthened and ennobled. Your comprehension of the character of God will be deepened; and with the whole plan of salvation clearly defined in your mind, you will be better able to fulfill your divine commission. From a sense of thorough conviction, you can then testify to men of the immutable character of the law manifested by the death of Christ on the cross, the malignant nature of sin, and the righteousness of God in justifying the believer in Jesus, on condition of his future obedience to the statutes of God's government in heaven and earth."²

In this issue of *The Reformation Herald* we will examine these ten promises of God as something to be cherished by God's remnant saints depicted in Revelation 14:12. The beautiful symmetry of God's law is an exhaustless theme, and in this exposition, some of the commandments will be examined in pairs. That is not to limit, of course, the fact that they might just as readily be examined individually or in different sets of

pairs or groupings than what is being presented here. Indeed, the pure, holy precepts of God's sacred law form a perfectly designed whole whose principles exquisitely intertwine and overlap in the infinite wisdom of the Almighty. Just as an example, "The fifth commandment is sacred; but if you should transgress any of the first four precepts of the decalogue, wherein is revealed the duty of man to his Creator, you would not be in a favorable position for the sacred observance of the last six commandments which specify the duties of man to his fellow man. To break any one of the commandments which specify the duty of man to God is to violate the principles of the entire law."³

"We must be partakers of the divine nature before we can represent the Christlike character and practice the works of Christ. The climbing Christian will not sit passively, claiming the promises, enjoying the grace given him of God, but will work from principle."⁴ May this noble aim be our continual aspiration through these ten promises of strength from our Saviour! *R*

References

¹ *The SDA Bible Commentary* [E. G. White Comments], vol. 1, p. 1105. [Emphasis supplied.]

² *The Review and Herald*, April 24, 1888. [Emphasis supplied.]

³ *The Signs of the Times*, February 28, 1878.

⁴ *Manuscript Releases*, vol. 19, p. 347.

Experiencing the New Covenant

A Bible and Spirit of Prophecy compilation, with comments by D. P. Silva

Adam and Eve were enjoying the Garden of Eden with all its blessings: Direct communication with God, natural beauty, peaceful animals, everything in perfect balance. . . . All of these were freely given under certain conditions: Perfect obedience to God's law of love.

However, the first couple decided to disbelieve the words of God and believe instead in the old serpent's words. The result: separation from their Creator, expulsion from Paradise, despair, and eternal death, unless God would provide some way out. Indeed, God's wonderful love had already provided for a special rescue plan: The Son of God would take the human's place and die instead—thus paying the high price for our salvation. The new covenant would be implemented.

What were the promises included in the new covenant?

"After those days, saith the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people. . . . They shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the Lord: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more" (Jeremiah 31:33, 34).

We can hardly even imagine the great joy of Adam and Eve when

they heard the words of the Lord to the old serpent: "I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel" (Genesis 3:15).

Before the Fall, both Adam and Eve had had God's law written in their heart. They were covered with a garment of light. They had enjoyed free communication with God and the heavenly creatures. But because of sin they lost everything and were now under the sentence of eternal death.

Only as a result of

the covenant of grace—through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ—could they recover Paradise.

Let us enumerate the blessings of the new covenant:

The forgiveness of our iniquities.

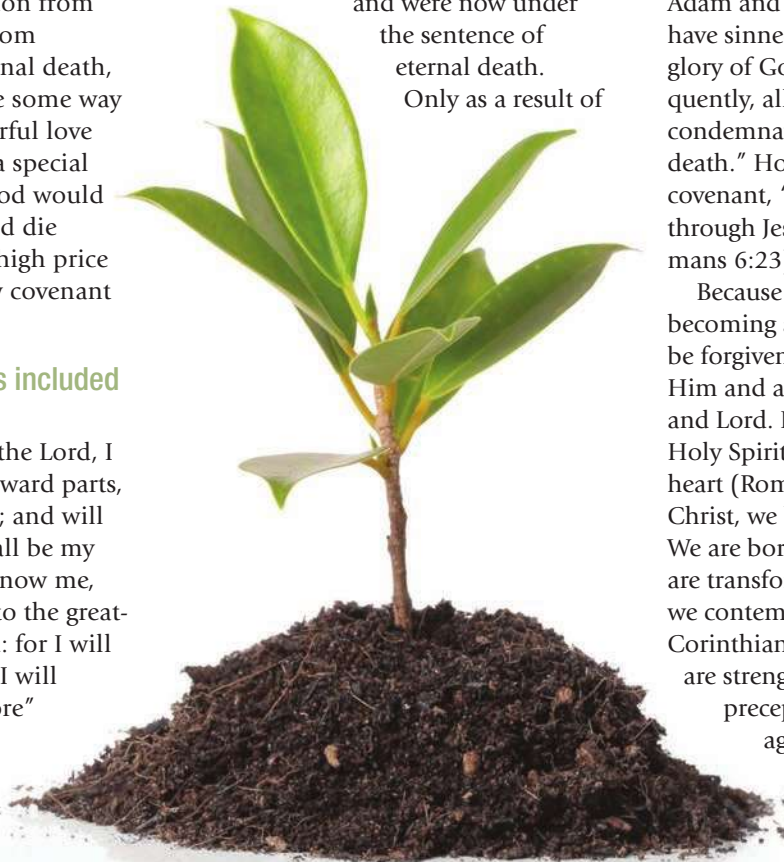
God's law of love is written in our heart.

The restoration to being God's children again.

Good news for every sinner

The promises of the new covenant were not exclusively made only to Adam and Eve. The Bible says that "all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). Consequently, all human beings are under condemnation: "For the wages of sin is death." However, according to the new covenant, "the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Romans 6:23).

Because Christ took our place, becoming a "curse for us," we can be forgiven if we submit ourselves to Him and accept Him as our Saviour and Lord. Being justified by faith, the Holy Spirit writes God's law in our heart (Romans 5:5). As we believe in Christ, we become children of God. We are born again (John 3:3, 5). We are transformed from glory to glory as we contemplate Christ's character (2 Corinthians 3:18). By God's grace we are strengthened to obey His holy precepts. And when Christ comes again, we will live forever with Him in the mansions He has gone to prepare for His obedient children.



What does the new covenant do for us?

“Under the new covenant, the conditions by which eternal life may be gained are the same as under the old. The conditions are, and ever have been, based on *perfect obedience*. Under the old covenant, there were many offenses of a daring, presumptuous character, for which there was no atonement specified by law. In the new and better covenant, Christ has fulfilled the law for the transgressors of law, if they receive Him by faith as a personal Saviour. ‘As many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God’ (John 1:12). Mercy and forgiveness are the reward of all who come to Christ trusting in His merits to take away their sins. We are cleansed from sin by the blood of Christ Jesus our Saviour.”¹

“The most striking feature of the covenant of peace that the Lord has made with human beings is the exceeding richness of the pardoning mercy offered to the sinner if he repents and turns from sin. ‘I will be merciful to their unrighteousness,’ the Lord declares of those who repent, ‘and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more’ (Hebrews 8:12). Does God turn from justice in showing mercy to the sinner?—No; God can never dishonor His law by suffering it to be transgressed with impunity. Under the new covenant, perfect obedience is the condition of life. If the sinner repents, and confesses his sin, he will find pardon. Forgiveness is secured for him by Christ’s sacrifice in his behalf. Christ has paid the demands of the law for every repentant, believing sinner.”²

Justification, sanctification, righteousness

“God’s people are justified through the administration of the ‘better covenant,’ through Christ’s righteousness. A covenant is an agreement by which parties bind themselves and each other to the fulfillment of certain conditions. Thus the human agent enters into agreement with God to comply with the conditions specified in His Word. His conduct shows whether or not he respects these conditions.

“The great law of love revealed in Eden, proclaimed upon Sinai, and in the new covenant written in the heart, is that which binds the human worker to the will of God.”

“Man gains everything by obeying the covenant-keeping God. God’s attributes are imparted to man, enabling him to exercise mercy and compassion. God’s covenant assures us of His unchangeable character. Why, then, are those who claim to believe in God changeable, fickle, untrustworthy? Why do they not do service heartily, as under obligation to please and glorify



God? It is not enough for us to have a general idea of God’s requirements. We must know for ourselves what His requirements and our obligations are. The terms of God’s covenant are, ‘Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself.’ These are the conditions of life. ‘This do,’ Christ said, ‘and thou shalt live’ (Luke 10:27, 28).

“Christ’s death and resurrection completed His covenant. Before this time, it was revealed through types and shadows, which pointed to the great offering to be made by the world’s Redeemer, offered in promise for the sins of the world. Anciently believers were saved by the same Saviour as now, but it was a God veiled. They saw God’s mercy in figures. The promise given to Adam and Eve in Eden was the gospel

to a fallen race. The promise was made that the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent’s head, and it should bruise His heel. Christ’s sacrifice is the glorious fulfillment of the whole Jewish economy. The Sun of Righteousness has risen. **Christ our righteousness is shining in brightness upon us.**

“God did not lessen His claim upon men in order to save them. When as a sinless offering Christ bowed His head and died, when by the Almighty’s unseen hand the veil of the temple was rent in twain, a new and living way was opened. All can now approach God through the merits of Christ. It is because the veil has been rent that men can draw nigh to God. They need not depend on priest or ceremonial sacrifice. Liberty is given to all to go directly to God through a personal Saviour.

“It is God’s pleasure and will that the blessings bestowed on man shall be given in perfect completeness. He has made provision that every difficulty may be overcome, every want supplied through the Holy Spirit. Thus He designs that man shall perfect a Christian character. God would have us contemplate His love, His promises, given so freely to those who have no merit in themselves. He would have us depend fully, gratefully, rejoicingly, in the righteousness provided for us in Christ. To all who come to God in His appointed way, He freely listens.”³

Living at peace with our Creator

“‘Take My yoke upon you,’ Jesus says. The yoke is an instrument of service. Cattle are yoked for labor, and

the yoke is essential that they may labor effectually. By this illustration Christ teaches us that we are called to service as long as life shall last. We are to take upon us His yoke, that we may be coworkers with Him.

"The yoke that binds to service is the law of God. The great law of love revealed in Eden, proclaimed upon Sinai, and in the new covenant written in the heart, is that which binds the human worker to the will of God. If we were left to follow our own inclinations, to go just where our will would lead us, we should fall into Satan's ranks and become possessors of his attributes. Therefore God confines us to His will, which is high, and noble, and elevating. He desires that we shall patiently and wisely take up the duties of service. The yoke of service Christ Himself has borne in humanity. He said, 'I delight to do Thy will, O My God: yea, Thy law is within My heart' (Psalm 40:8). 'I came down from heaven, not to do Mine own will, but the will of Him that sent Me' (John 6:38). Love for God, zeal for His glory, and love for fallen humanity, brought Jesus to earth to suffer and to die. This was the controlling power of His life. This principle He bids us adopt.

"There are many whose hearts are aching under a load of care because they seek to reach the world's standard. They have chosen its service, accepted

its perplexities, adopted its customs. Thus their character is marred, and their life made a weariness. In order to gratify ambition and worldly desires, they wound the conscience and bring upon themselves an additional burden of remorse. The continual worry is wearing out the life forces. Our Lord desires them to lay aside this yoke of bondage. He invites them to accept His yoke; He says, 'My yoke is easy, and My burden is light' (Matthew 11:30). He bids them seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and His promise is that all things needful to them for this life shall be added. Worry is blind and cannot discern the future; but Jesus sees the end from the beginning. In every difficulty He has His way prepared to bring relief. Our heavenly Father has a thousand ways to provide for us, of which we know nothing. Those who accept the one principle of making the service and honor of God supreme will find perplexities vanish, and a plain path before their feet. . . .

"In the heart of Christ, where reigned perfect harmony with God, there was perfect peace. He was never elated by applause, nor dejected by censure or disappointment. Amid the greatest opposition and the most cruel treatment, He was still of good courage. But many who profess to be His followers have an anxious, troubled

heart, because they are afraid to trust themselves with God. They do not make a complete surrender to Him; for they shrink from the consequences that such a surrender may involve. Unless they do make this surrender, they cannot find peace.

"It is the love of self that brings unrest. When we are born from above, the same mind will be in us that was in Jesus, the mind that led Him to humble Himself that we might be saved. Then we shall not be seeking the highest place. We shall desire to sit at the feet of Jesus and learn of Him. We shall understand that the value of our work does not consist in making a show and noise in the world, and in being active and zealous in our own strength. The value of our work is in proportion to the impartation of the Holy Spirit. Trust in God brings holier qualities of mind, so that in patience we may possess our souls.

"The yoke is placed upon the oxen to aid them in drawing the load, to lighten the burden. So with the yoke of Christ. When our will is swallowed up in the will of God, and we use His gifts to bless others, we shall find life's burden light. He who walks in the way of God's commandments is walking in company with Christ, and in His love the heart is at rest."⁴

The ultimate assurance

The same promise given to Adam and Even after their sin is extended to each one of us. We have a wonderful Saviour who gave His perfect life for everyone who will believe in Him fully. We can enjoy the blessing of the new covenant and experience the faithfulness of God to those who are also faithful to Him. "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9). And we can enjoy these blessings right here and now! *R*

References

¹ *Manuscript Releases*, vol. 1, p. 117.

² *The Signs of the Times*, June 28, 1905.

³ *The SDA Bible Commentary* [E. G. White Comments], vol. 7, p. 932. [Emphasis supplied.]

⁴ *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 329–331.



Who Is Worthy of Worship?

By Kay Clark

Considering the First and Second Commandments

Introduction

We often sing the well-known hymn, its words and music by an “unknown” author and composer, “Worthy, worthy is the lamb that was slain. . . . Love Him, serve Him, praise Him. . . , Till we all on Zion’s hill see the Lamb. . . .” Just who is this One who is worthy of our worship and praise? When we consider what it means to actually worship someone or something, it denotes someone or something that we have great confidence in, someone or something that has great power, even more than we have within ourselves.

Since there are many people in the world who worship many different things, both animate and inanimate, we will need to explore various avenues of thought in order to answer the above question. As we study together, may we be led by the Spirit of the One who has made all things.

The Ten Commandments of the Decalogue

As we have studied in the past about God’s holy law—the precepts by which our life needs to be governed—we find in them the very character of God. That character must be developed within us, as we profess to follow Him whom we

need to reflect at all times if we would enter heaven. That law concerns how we relate to God and also how we relate to our fellow humans. There are many principles contained in the law. These indeed govern how we live and act, and what kind of spirit we reflect day by day.

How does this process work, which enables us to show true worship to our Creator through our life and actions?

“The impartation of the Spirit is the impartation of the life of Christ. It imbues the receiver with the attributes of Christ. Only those who are thus taught of God, those who possess the inward working of the Spirit, and in whose life the Christ-life is manifested, are to stand as representative men, to minister in behalf of the church.”¹

The first commandment

As we explore the first of the ten promises given to God’s chosen people by the Creator Himself, we find these words, “Thou shalt have no other gods before me” (Exodus 20:3). In Deuteronomy 5:7 we find these similar words, “Thou shalt have none other gods before me.” Also, in Deuteronomy chapter 6 and verse 14, we read, “Ye shall not go after other gods, of the gods of the people

which are round about you.” If these warnings are ignored by the people to whom they have been given, what is the major result?

Just as when people choose to ignore the laws of the land in which they live, whom or what are they really ignoring? There are officials in authority who make and declare the laws that govern the society in which we live and if the people choose to reject those laws, they are in reality rejecting the authors of those laws. When this happens, there may be severe consequences to be suffered by the offenders and, in many cases, by others.

No government could exist without the laws by which respect and obedience are demanded so that order can be maintained among the inhabitants surrounding it. Any other plan than this would result only in chaos and disunity. When certain laws are not obeyed, people are in danger of losing life and possessions. The purpose of the laws created by society is to give protection and liberty to those who fall under its jurisdiction.

The seriousness of the written law

The first two of the ten governing laws of God as given to humanity were

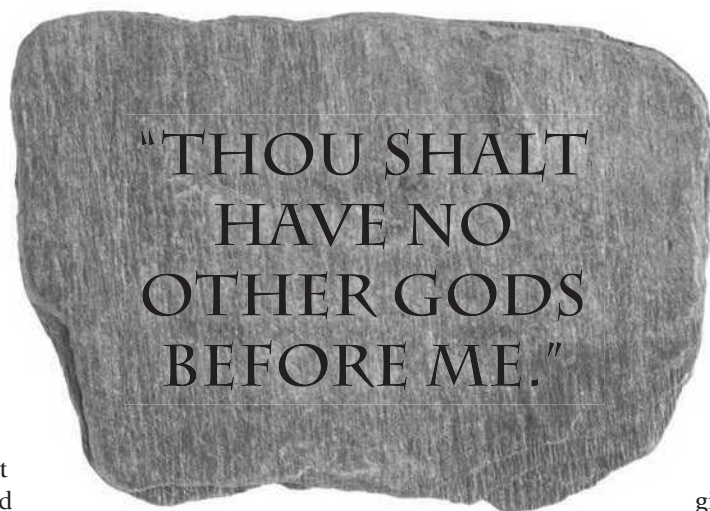
placed at the very beginning of the Decalogue for a purpose. It was so very important for these to be at the head of the list of humanity's relationship to God so that we would recognize the importance of the precepts which followed. A relationship of respect had to be established so that obedience would be rendered to the one true God and His authority.

There is a prevalent doctrine being preached today by many people: It proclaims that God's law is no longer binding upon people. It is difficult to imagine that the universe, which is under the control of its Creator, could or would operate without His eternal law. There is a law made by Him that keeps all the planets and other heavenly bodies in place and which also governs the created beings that have been given life by Him.

In the beginning of human life upon earth, in the form of the first man and his help-meet, the first woman, that perfect law of love was written within their hearts. It was their wonderful privilege at that time to walk and talk with their Creator face to face. They were in perfect obedience to Him and complied with His will. Their worship of Him was complete, and there was nothing in their lives that complicated their relationship with their God. There were no idols of any kind to come between them and the One who had made them.

It was after their fall into the bondage of sin, which was brought on by their listening to the great deceiver, that those who had been made in the image of God found themselves far-removed from the happy state they had been enjoying. It was then that humanity, as they found themselves wandering in the wilderness after having been freed from Egypt, needed to be reminded of the law of God which they were far from obeying. It was at this time that the law was given in written form by God Himself to Moses, the chosen one who was leading them out of their bondage in Egypt.

It was during this time that the seriousness of that law which was to govern the people was presented to their mind. It was at that time that they were to make a new commitment to their God and repent of their wrongdoing. This law was to point out to them once again their relationship with their God and with their fellow humans. They had been guilty of forming images of other things and bowing down and worshipping them, totally leaving the true God out of their life. The physical bondage which they had been into also put them into spiritual bondage. They had lost their relationship with their God.



Yes, they had to be reminded that, "Thou shalt have no other gods before me."

The second commandment

The second commandment of the Decalogue is closely related to the first one. It reads thus, "Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me; and shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments" (Exodus 20:4-6).

This commandment goes into more detail than the first one. Within it we find both a warning and a promise. A warning about the consequences of making graven images and worshipping them: that the sins of the fathers would be visited upon the children unto the third and fourth generations. The promise given was that mercy would be shown to thousands of them which loved Him and were obedient to Him.

Yes, He is to be worshipped and His law is to be observed and obeyed. It is a real insult to God when His professed followers allow idols of any kind to be placed in their life instead of Him. Whatever form idolatry takes in the life, it is the faith of the people that is being tested. The children of Israel had received specific instruction from God and this practice was strictly forbidden. By this willful disobedience, both the first and second commandments were being transgressed. Their willful sin of disobedience was so grave that those who were guilty were given specific instruction not to go anywhere near the mountain where God was to descend to give to Moses the holy law the second time.

Two related sins

When we look at what idolatry is, we see within it a twin sister, as it were; something which is so closely akin to it that one is inseparably connected to the other. This closely related sin is called false worship. To be in idolatry is to worship or serve something that is not God. This could consist of images or statues or anything made by hand. There are even some who worship the heavenly bodies or even people and animals. Those who cherish these things and make gods of them will find somewhere in their experience that these false gods will not be able to save them or help them in their time of great need.

There are even some religions that have tried to remove entirely the

second commandment from the Decalogue, because it prohibits that which their belief system teaches. As we look deeply into the reasons God has given the warning regarding the principles of these precepts contained in His law, we see clearly that He does not want us to share our affection or devotion with anything or anyone else. We read in Isaiah 45:5 and 6, "I am the Lord, and there is none else, there is no God beside me: I girded thee, though thou hast not known me: that they may know from the rising of the sun, and from the west, that there is none beside me. I am the Lord, and there is none else."

Who are we humans that we should feel free to turn aside from the One who has made us in His image, who are to reflect His character? Why would we desire to go after anything that is man-made? Who are we even to think that a man-made object could take the place of the One who sacrificed His sinless life so that the sins of humanity could be forgiven? Who are we that we should think that our rules of life should be higher than those that God has set forth? It is in this second commandment, in verse 5, that He proclaims Himself to be a jealous God; He will not tolerate for us to share our worship and affection with any other. He will not compete with any other object that would become a god or an idol to us.

He is our Creator; we are His created beings. There is to be no worship of icons, images, heroes, or anything animate or inanimate upon which the world places such high value upon.

What is our test?

God has revealed His will and His character to us through His law. It is sacred because it is of Him and pertains to Him. Obedience to that law is the test of discipleship, so how will

we relate to the light that shines upon our pathway? The Scriptures tell us that there will be many false prophets which will arise, and their words will sound so winning that if the followers of God are not careful even they could be deceived and go after false teachings. "Obedience is the test of discipleship. It is the keeping of the command-



ments that proves the sincerity of our professions of love. When the doctrine we accept kills sin in the heart, purifies the soul from defilement, bears fruit unto holiness, we may know that it is the truth of God. When benevolence, kindness, tenderheartedness, sympathy, are manifest in our lives; when the joy of right doing is in our hearts; when we exalt Christ, and not self, we may know that our faith is of the right order."²

There is another area in our life in which we may fail to observe these first two commands of the Decalogue. That

is in our own personal attitude: How do we equate ourselves in relationship with others and with our desires? God wants us to have our interests connected with His interests; He wants us to love Him and serve Him with all our heart. Instead of being prideful and selfish, He wants us to think of the needs of others and be of service to them. Whenever

we do good to our fellow humans we are to do it as unto God, for He is love. We are to be humble before Him and give Him all the honor and glory rather than exalting self. It is important that we realize that all things come from Him and of ourselves we can do nothing. There is such a thing as blind idolatry—when we are in reality giving homage to someone other than God but do not recognize it for what it is. We receive many benefits in life but fail to show gratitude to the One who is the Giver of those gifts. We are quick to contend that we have them because of our own works. It is important that we remember that without Him, we would not have life and capabilities that enable us to be productive in order to obtain our needs.

It is when we come to the point where we know that we are nothing and that God is everything, that we can truly surrender all to Him—to be emptied out so that Christ may come and abide within us. Instead of

holding onto our idols, whatever they may be, we may become as clay in the Potter's hand, to be molded and shaped into His image. This is how humanity was made in the beginning, perfectly reflecting the image of the Creator.

A few idols . . .

As mentioned above, anything that we harbor within ourselves that stands between us and God becomes an idol to us. It does not have to be made out of wood or stone; it does not even have

to be a lofty visible structure. What about a **divided heart**? This can easily lead to double-mindedness, and in that condition a person cannot be stable. He or she may profess to love God supremely but is placing more esteem upon self than upon Him. When we have an eye single to the glory of God, it will be easy to serve Him and walk in the pathway that leads to heaven.

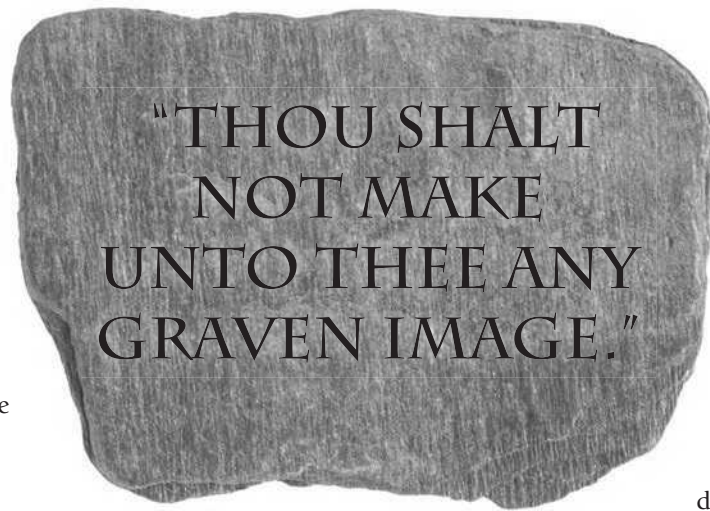
Are the **attractions of the world** more appealing than the things of God—and those promises which He has made to us of life eternal in beautiful surroundings if we will truly be His faithful children? The bright lights, the amusement parks, the desire for the largest and most expensive of everything, the high position which may lead to more money and power; those things which we will sacrifice principle for in order to obtain them. . . . Are these things what we have our heart set upon so that we will try to gain them no matter what the price? If that is the case, then these are our idols and we are worshipping them more than we worship the God who made all things.

What about something as routine in our life as food? Can **appetite** become an idol? can it be a barrier between us and our God? That was the temptation over which our first parents stumbled and fell. The tempter knows where our weak spots are, and that is where he will attack. Once again, we must be fortified with the correct principles and seek the help which we need from the Lord so that we may overcome the temptation to eat unhealthful foods and at the wrong times.

The **fashions** of our day are as an abomination to the Lord. Men as well as women have allowed the influence of the world to creep into their wardrobe, and they dress themselves with less than modest apparel. This also stands as a stumbling block, for it surely comes as a wedge between us and He who advised that we should

look and act differently than the world. Could this also become an idol? Yes, if we are unwilling to give it up and return to a “thus saith the Lord”!

Some other idols which we might be cherishing include **covetousness, pride, selfishness, and evil passions**. Some of these we may recognize within ourselves, but others we might be harboring while not being fully aware of their presence. We must be willing to examine ourselves to see whether we are truly in the faith. We must be willing to pray with the psalmist, “Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me” (Psalm 51:10).



Unkind words and gossip about others are also very wrong for the professed people of God to entertain. The spirit in which we utter our words must be well guarded, for they can be so hurtful and discouraging to others. If this type of speech is habitual, it is also considered idolatrous, for it is not of God. The sowing of bitterness within the hearts of others brings huge stumbling blocks before them. We are not to draw apart from one another but instead our unity and love for one another will reveal the character of Christ.

The people of the world are worshipping false gods. They are to be helped to turn from their false worship by looking unto something better. Our own life is to be purified and sanctified so that we will be that people who can

let the light of truth shine upon their pathway.

That we may worship Him

“To praise God in fullness and sincerity of heart is as much a duty as is prayer. We are to show to the world and to all the heavenly intelligences that we appreciate the wonderful love of God for fallen humanity and that we are expecting larger and yet larger blessings from His infinite fullness. Far more than we do, we need to speak of the precious chapters in our experience. After a special outpouring of the Holy Spirit, our joy in the Lord and our efficiency in His service would be greatly increased by recounting His goodness and His wonderful works in behalf of His children.”³

As we contemplate more fully upon Him who only is worthy of our worship, let us determine within our heart that we will not just make a profession of Him, but that we will truly make that full commitment to love and serve Him over and above everything else. Let us wear His badge of truth, for to profess something yet do another is dangerous. It is dangerous to ourselves, to the truth we represent, and also to other people who are watching us.

Appeal

In the light of these first two commandments written by the hand of God Himself, let us look more closely into our own heart and see what needs to be extracted and discarded. Remember, He is a jealous God and will not tolerate the sharing of our affections with false gods and false worship. He wants to save us unto Himself; this is proof of His infinite love for us. Amen. *R*

References

¹ *The Desire of Ages*, p. 805.

² *Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, pp. 146, 147.

³ *Christ's Object Lessons*, pp. 299, 300.

Forgetfully Vain— or Keenly in *Remembrance?*

A Bible and Spirit of Prophecy compilation, with comments by B. Montrose

Considering the Third and Fourth Commandments

The apostle Peter opens his second epistle with a powerful message about the process of developing a Christlike character. We often call it “Peter’s ladder”:

“According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue: whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust. And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; and to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; and to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity. For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But **he that lacketh these things** is blind, and cannot see afar off, and **hath forgotten** that he was purged from his old sins” (2 Peter 1:3–9, emphasis added).

According to this passage, when we really know Christ, every tool needed for a victorious Christian life is provided to us through the divine power of God. But if the fruit of our life is not revealing the process of sanctification, it means we have just plain by forgotten about the grace extended to us in Christ’s forgiveness! Have you forgotten that you have been forgiven? It seems that many of us have. Yes, we may believe the theory of it; we may know the technicality of it, but too often we fail to appreciate fully the tremendous value of it!

The pure in heart see God

It is the pure in heart that see the evidence of God. “Blessed are the pure in heart—**now; not**, Blessed **will be** the pure in heart.”¹

“The pure in heart see God in a new and endearing relation, as their Redeemer; and while they discern the purity and loveliness of His character, they long to reflect His image. They see Him as a Father longing to embrace a repenting son, and their hearts are filled with joy unspeakable and full of glory.

“The pure in heart discern the Creator in the works of His mighty

hand, in the things of beauty that comprise the universe. In His written word they read in clearer lines the revelation of His mercy, His goodness, and His grace. The truths that are hidden from the wise and prudent are revealed to babes. The beauty and preciousness of truth, which are undiscerned by the worldly-wise, are constantly unfolding to those who have a trusting, childlike desire to know and to do the will of God. We discern the truth by becoming, ourselves, partakers of the divine nature.

“The pure in heart live as in the visible presence of God during the time He apportions them in this world.”²

If we are not keeping fresh and keen in our memory the innocence and joy of that “first love” experience when we first realized that we have a Saviour who will forgive every sin we confess, then we are also not growing in sanctification. If that is the case, then we are not becoming more Christlike—more holy—in character. And if we are not becoming holy in actual daily life, then we cannot really be keeping the Sabbath very holy. Regardless of what may be professed, such are not Sabbathkeepers.

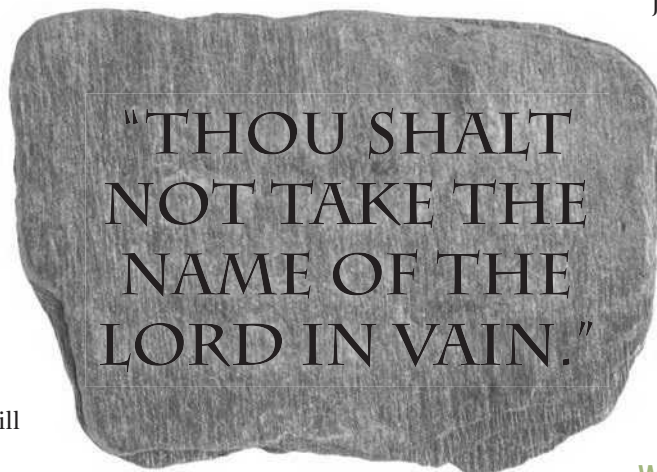
Just think: If you were to ask a mechanic who is working with grease to handle a white paper—yet keep it clean—he will not be able to do it, unless he would first wash his hands. Likewise, it is only a clean, holy people that will truly be able to keep the Sabbath holy—not merely attend religious meetings on Saturday—but rather to actually keep the seventh day holy according to the commandment.

“If thou turn away thy foot from the sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on my holy day; and **call the sabbath a delight**, the holy of the Lord, honourable; and shalt honour him, **not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words**: then shalt thou **delight thyself in the Lord**; and I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth, and feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father: for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it” (Isaiah 58:13, 14, emphasis added).

The first word in the fourth commandment is, “Remember.” This commandment—this magnificent promise—will be obeyed by people who have in the forefront of their minds to keep God’s day holy because they love to be with their Lord; they cherish His divine presence.

“Had the Sabbath been universally kept, man’s thoughts and affections would have been led to the Creator as

the object of reverence and worship, and there would never have been an idolater, an atheist, or an infidel.”³ In other words, every week, the memory of everyone would have been nudged to think of God. But because of the alluring enticements of sin, it was not convenient to do so any longer.



Does the same temptation come to us today—to settle for being thoughtlessly casual Saturday churchgoers instead of real Sabbathkeepers?

Forgetfulness

What causes us to forget the most important things we should be remembering? Distractions. Vanities of vanities. The wise man explained, “Lo, this only have I found, that God hath made man upright; but they have sought out many inventions” (Ecclesiastes 7:29).

“Satan invents unnumbered schemes to occupy our minds, that they may not dwell upon the very work with which we ought to be best acquainted. The archdeceiver hates the great truths that bring to view an atoning sacrifice and an all-powerful mediator. He knows that with him everything depends on his **diverting minds** from Jesus and His truth.”⁴

“Many think it a sufficient excuse for the grossest errors to plead forgetfulness. But do they not, as well as others, possess intellectual faculties? Then they should discipline their minds to be retentive. **It is a sin to forget**, a sin to be negligent. If you form a habit of negligence, you may neglect your own soul’s salvation and at last find that you are unready for the kingdom of God.”⁵

What is preventing us from climbing the upward ladder to perfection?

“Many care only to skim the surface. They do not think deep and become master of their duties. They feel ready to grasp the highest round of the ladder without the trouble of climbing up step after step. We are pained at heart as we compare the work coming forth from their hands with God’s righteous standard of faithfulness which God alone can accept. There is a painful defect, a remissness, a superficial gloss, a wanting in solidity and in intelligent knowledge and carefulness and thoroughness. . . .

“Men must get hold conscientiously and feel that they are doing the work of God. . . . They will be constant to principle. They will do their work, not to secure a great name or great wages, not for the purpose of weaving self into all their works, and of appearing to be somebody in the world, but to be right in everything in the sight of God.”⁶

“‘Strive,’ said Jesus, ‘to enter in at the strait gate’ (Luke 13:24). The way of the believer is marked out by God above the ladder. All his endeavors will be in vain if he has not virtue of character, a practical knowledge of Christ through obedience to all His requirements.



Those who have faith must be careful to show their faith by their works."⁷

How does this relate to the danger of breaking the third commandment?

Like all the other commandments in the Decalogue, the third commandment is also a promise. If we truly know Christ as it is our privilege to know Him, we will not be taking the name of the Lord in vain. The thought and utterance of His name (and character) will not be handled as a light or trivial matter. As believers in the three angels' messages, we have seen how the people of the world misuse the Creator's name with swearing, curse words, and expletives. Thankfully, when dedicating their life to Christ, most new believers early recognize the need to purge their vocabulary from such inappropriate speech.

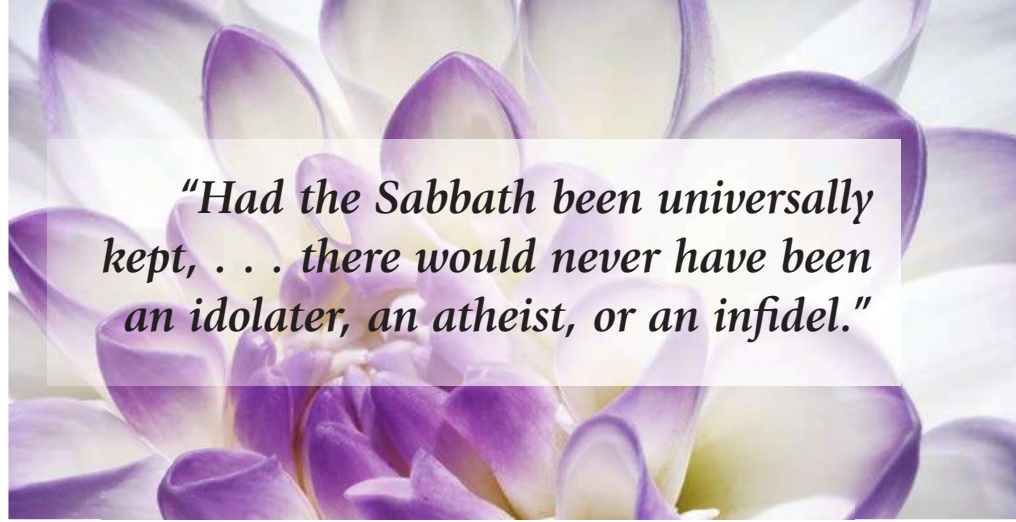
But what about the next step? How might we, too—living as we are in the Laodicean era, likewise be guilty of taking the name of the Lord in vain—perhaps in a more subtle way?

"It is common for men and women to speak of themselves as Christians whose whole claim lies in the assuming of the name. They do not reveal that they are partakers of the divine nature. They do not reveal love for Jesus or for religious things. As far as their words and their spirit and their character are concerned, no one would suspect they were Christians. Their assent to the truth has no virtue. This counts for nothing in the sight of God."⁸

What must we therefore realize?

"True faith works by love and purifies the soul. Truth is an active, working principle, molding heart and life so that there is a constant upward movement, climbing the ladder Jacob saw, to the Lord above the ladder. **In every step of climbing, the will is obtaining a new spring of action.** The moral tone is becoming more like the mind and character of Christ."⁹

"**The corruption of the world is seeking to steal our senses;** all the un-



"Had the Sabbath been universally kept, . . . there would never have been an idolater, an atheist, or an infidel."

holy influences on every side are working to hold us to a low, earthly level—blinding our sensibilities, degrading our desires, enfeebling our conscience, and crippling our religious faculties by urging us to give sway to the lower nature. Corruptions around us find corruptions within. Each works upon the other.

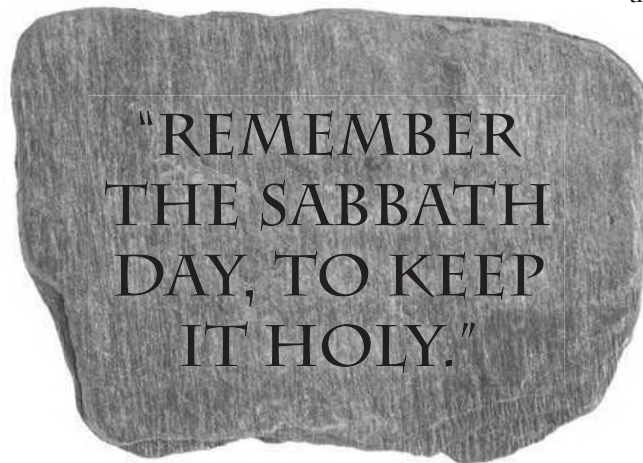
"To draw us away from all this is the precious ladder. The eye is attracted to God above the ladder. The invitation

upon God above the ladder. Christ is the ladder. We lay hold on Christ, climbing up by Christ, resolving to return, broken, contrite, subdued, to the Father above the ladder. The offers of God's mercy, of living connection with God, of grace multiplied as we advance step by step, make the distance from earth more apparent."¹⁰

"No one can love God supremely and transgress one of His commandments. The heart softened and subdued with the beauty of Christ's character and bridled by the pure and lofty rules which He has given us will put into practice what it has learned of love and will follow Jesus forthwith in humble obedience. The living power of faith will reveal itself in loving acts."¹¹

"To make our calling and election sure is to follow the Bible plan to closely examine ourselves, to make strict inquiry whether we are indeed converted, whether our minds are drawn out after God and heavenly things, our wills renewed, our whole souls changed. **To make our calling and election sure requires far greater diligence than many are giving to this important matter.**"¹²

"The God of Heaven has multiplied warnings, entreaties, and instructions, that we may be prepared to stand in the time of the overwhelming destruction. We are not left in darkness. Those who meditate and act upon the instructions that God has given will cleanse themselves from all filthiness of the flesh and of the spirit. They will keep in mind the command to 'be diligent,' to be holy in all their conversation and life."¹³



comes from the glory above it, Come up higher. The heart is attracted. Steps are taken in advance, one after another. Higher and still higher we ascend. At every step the attraction becomes greater. Higher, holier ambitions take possession of the soul. The guilt of the past life is left behind. We dare not look down the ladder at those things which long poisoned the springs of true happiness and kindled remorse, weakened and depraved the will, and repressed every better impulse. The eye is steadfastly fixed, with grateful, trembling emotion,

How does this diligence relate to the third and fourth commandments?

The diligent followers of Christ will not take the knowledge of Him lightly—but rather will cherish His presence with deep appreciation for His sacrifice to redeem them. And such gratitude will manifest itself on a daily basis—and even more so on that weekly day the Lord has set aside as His own.

Behaving circumspectly

“When the Sabbath commences, we should place a guard upon ourselves, upon our acts and our words, lest we rob God by appropriating to our own use that time which is strictly the Lord’s. We should not do ourselves, nor suffer our children to do, any manner of our own work for a livelihood, or anything which could have been done on the six working days. Friday is the day of preparation. Time can then be devoted to making the necessary preparation for the Sabbath and to thinking and conversing about it. Nothing which will in the sight of Heaven be regarded as a violation of the holy Sabbath should be left unsaid or undone, to be said or done upon the Sabbath. God requires not only that we refrain from physical labor upon the Sabbath, but that the mind be disciplined to dwell upon sacred themes. The fourth commandment is virtually transgressed by conversing upon worldly things or by engaging in light and trifling conversation. Talking upon anything or everything which may come into the mind is speaking our own words. Every deviation from right brings us into bondage and condemnation. . . .

“You have frequently failed to ‘remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy;’ you have often forgotten, and have spoken your own words upon God’s sanctified day. You have been unguarded, and have upon the Sabbath joined with the unconsecrated in conversation upon the common topics of the day, such as gains and losses, stocks, crops, and provisions. In this your example injures your influence. You should reform.

“Those who are not fully converted to the truth frequently let their minds

run freely upon worldly business, and, although they may rest from physical toil upon the Sabbath, their tongues speak out what is in their minds; hence these words concerning cattle, crops, losses, and gains. All this is Sabbath breaking. **If the mind is running upon worldly matters, the tongue will reveal it; for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.**

“The example of ministers especially should be circumspect in this respect. Upon the Sabbath they should conscientiously restrict themselves to conversation upon religious themes—to present truth, present duty, the Christian’s hopes and fears, trials, conflicts, and afflictions; to overcoming at last, and the reward to be received.

“Ministers of Jesus should stand as reprovers to those who fail to remember the Sabbath to keep it holy. They should kindly and solemnly reprove those who engage in worldly conversation upon the Sabbath and at the same time claim to be Sabbathkeepers. They should encourage devotion to God upon His holy day.

“None should feel at liberty to spend sanctified time in an unprofitable manner. It is displeasing to God for Sabbathkeepers to sleep during much of the Sabbath. They dishonor their Creator in so doing, and, by their example, say that the six days are too precious for them to spend in resting. They must make money, although it be by robbing themselves of needed sleep, which they make up by sleeping away holy time. They then excuse themselves by saying: ‘The Sabbath was given for a day of rest. I will not deprive myself of rest to attend meeting, for I need rest.’ Such make a wrong use of the sanctified day. They should, upon that day especially, interest their families in its observance and assemble at the house of prayer with the few or with the many, as the case may be. They should devote their time and energies to spiritual exercises, that the divine influence resting upon the Sabbath may attend them through the week. Of all the days in the week, none are so favorable for devotional thoughts and feelings as the Sabbath.

“All heaven was represented to

me as beholding and watching upon the Sabbath those who acknowledge the claims of the fourth commandment and are observing the Sabbath. Angels were marking their interest in, and high regard for, this divine institution. **Those who sanctified the Lord God in their hearts by a strictly devotional frame of mind, and who sought to improve the sacred hours in keeping the Sabbath to the best of their ability, and to honor God by calling the Sabbath a delight—these the angels were specially blessing with light and health, and special strength was given them.** But, on the other hand, the angels were turning from those who failed to appreciate the sacredness of God’s sanctified day, and were removing from them their light and their strength.”¹⁴

“Those who discuss business matters and lay plans on the Sabbath are regarded by God as though engaged in the actual transaction of business. **To keep the Sabbath holy, we should not even allow our minds to dwell upon things of a worldly character.**”¹⁵

“All the ways of a man are clean in his own eyes; but the Lord weigheth the spirits. Commit thy works unto the Lord, and thy thoughts shall be established” (Proverbs 16:2, 3).

May the Lord help us never to take His name, character, and calling in vain—and truly to rest on “the sabbath day according to the commandment” (Luke 23:56)! *R*

References

- ¹ *Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students*, p. 103. [Emphasis supplied.]
- ² *Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, pp. 26, 27.
- ³ *The Great Controversy*, p. 438.
- ⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 488. [Emphasis supplied.]
- ⁵ *Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 359. [Emphasis supplied.]
- ⁶ *Counsels on Health*, pp. 284, 285.
- ⁷ *Manuscript Releases*, vol. 19, p. 340.
- ⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 340, 341.
- ⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 341. [Emphasis supplied.]
- ¹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 346, 347. [Emphasis supplied.]
- ¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 349.
- ¹² *Ibid.*, pp. 351, 352. [Emphasis supplied.]
- ¹³ *The Signs of the Times*, February 10, 1888.
- ¹⁴ *Testimonies*, vol. 2, pp. 702–705. [Emphasis supplied.]
- ¹⁵ *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 307.



Honor and Respect

*A Bible and Spirit of Prophecy compilation,
with comments by J. Zamy*

Considering the Fifth and Sixth Commandments

Jesus, just before His death on the cross, gave a clear directive to His disciples: “Love one another” (John 13:34). This was to be a token to the world that they were His true followers. Today, the same principle is presented to us who claim to be Christ’s representatives.

This principle starts at home, beginning when we are children—but it does not end there. It is to endure for a lifetime and be carried over to the larger sphere outside the home:

“Honour thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee” (Exodus 20:12).

“Parents are entitled to a degree of love and respect which is due to no other person. God Himself, who has placed upon them a responsibility for the souls committed to their charge, has ordained that during the earlier years of life, parents shall stand in the place of God to their children. And he

who rejects the rightful authority of his parents is rejecting the authority of God. The fifth commandment requires children not only to yield respect, submission, and obedience to their parents but also to give them love and tenderness, to lighten their cares, to guard their reputation, and to succor and comfort them in old age. It also enjoins respect for ministers and rulers and for all others to whom God has delegated authority.”¹

It all boils down to love, honor, and respect for others—especially to those having some type of authority. Without love, we tend to lose respect for our fellow-erring mortals. We see their shortcomings and become discouraged as a result. But to have such a harsh, unforgiving attitude is not in harmony with Christianity.

A danger to avoid

Satan—knowing how powerful the church can be if united—uses all his sophistry to bring the church into a situation of chaos. Among the many

weapons he uses are evilspeaking and suspicion. Many are led to find faults in their brethren and/or sisters, defaming the character of those with whom they associate. Envy, strife, evil surmising, and backbiting are widespread among in Christian communities. These have become so common that a great number do not even realize the enormity of such a satanic act.

Many do not make a good use of their tongue, yet the holy scriptures teach, “If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man’s religion is vain” (James 1:26). Can we engage in the work of evilspeaking with safety? Is there any danger if we deliberately take our time to dwell on the defects of character of our brethren or sisters, and even speak to others about them? What do we do when we engage in this work? Can this be considered a serious matter? What consequences will fall upon those who practice this pernicious habit? What is its bearing upon the church? Let’s see.

“Be careful to speak kind, tender words which will comfort and encourage.” —This Day With God, p. 225.

A destroying weapon

The Bible says, “Thou shalt not kill” (Exodus 20:13). But a very effective weapon used in this realm is the tongue. Speaking against the prophet Jeremiah, the Israelites declared, “Come, and let us smite him with the tongue, and let us not give heed to any of his words” (Jeremiah 18:18). Other passages of the sacred scriptures describe the tongue as a sword (see Psalms 57:4; 64:2, 3). The apostle James compares this member to a flame of fire (see James 3:6). Many, though claiming to be the followers of Christ, are engaged in a work of verbal homicide. By the wrong use of the tongue, much damage has been caused in families, in society, and—most sadly—in the church.

A serious matter

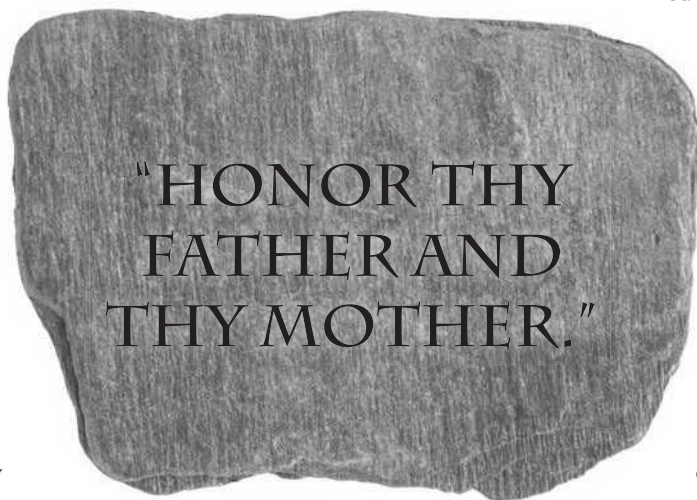
There are many factors that need to be taken into consideration regarding this fact. Those who profess to be the chosen people of God, separated from the kingdom of Satan, honoring God’s name, confessing Christ, and in whom the Spirit of God dwells, should be very careful of what use they make of their words. The Lord plainly describes what happens when we engage in the work of evilspeaking:

Uniting with Satan: One of the ways a person ends up identifying himself or herself with the devil is by doing the very work that is the enemy’s specialty. Jesus frankly told the religious leaders of His day, “Ye are of your father the devil” (John 8:44). These words were pronounced because those men were filled with the thought of killing Jesus—

they were contemplating an act clearly driven by the spirit of Satan. Therefore, all those who engage in the work of evil surmising identify themselves with Satan and are working with him.

“Whoever lends himself to this work of evil surmising, reproach, and accusation is rendering service to Satan, who is the accuser of the brethren, accusing them before God day and night.”²

Blaspheming the name of God: The Bible says, “The name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles through you, as it is written” (Romans 2:24). But Christians should realize that the same thing can happen whenever they practice the work of



evilspeaking and criticizing. The servant of the Lord was constrained to write: “My brethren and sisters, when you have nothing better to speak of than something about the faults of others, remember that ‘silence is eloquence.’ Cease to dwell upon the shortcomings of others. Keep the tongue sanctified unto God. Refrain from saying anything that might detract from the influence

of another; for by indulging in these words of criticism, *you blaspheme God’s holy name as verily as you would were you to swear.* I am instructed to present these things before you, that you may see how you dishonor the name of Christ Jesus.”³

Denying Christ: Christ promised to confess before the Father all those who would confess Him before the world (see Matthew 10:32). This act of confessing Jesus does not consist only in preaching the gospel or professing a Christian faith. It also includes refraining from the wrong use of the tongue, especially in speaking against the subjects of His love. The inspired word says, “There are many ways wherein we may acknowledge our Lord and many ways wherein we may deny Him. *We may deny Him in our words, by speaking evil of others.*”⁴

Grieving the Holy Spirit: The apostle Paul, referring to the use of speech, explains, “Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers” (Ephesians 4:29). Then he brings a link to these words by saying, “Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption” (verse 30). This makes it clear that the Christian—by the wrong use of words—causes the Holy Spirit to be grieved.

Further, we read that “Those who *think and speak evil* of their fellow laborers, opening the mind to false reports, and taking up a reproach against their neighbor, *grieve the Spirit of God*, and put Christ to open shame.”⁵

“If you open your heart to envy and evil surmising, the Holy Spirit cannot abide with you.”⁶

Losing sight of Jesus: We read about the experience of Joseph and Mary who lost sight of Jesus for three days by the simple act of neglecting communion with God (see Luke 2:41–46).

We can suffer the same loss by engaging in evilspeaking. The word of God explains, "By one day's neglect [Joseph and Mary] lost the Saviour; but it cost them three days of anxious search to find Him. So with us; by idle talk, *evilspeaking*, . . . we may in one day lose the Saviour's presence, and it may take many days of sorrowful search to find Him, and regain the peace that we have lost."⁷

How many professed Christians today have lost the presence of Christ by backbiting about their brethren and/or sisters? How many days, months, or even years will it then take for them to restore their communion with Christ?

Unfit for the kingdom of heaven:

David, under Inspiration, declared that those who will dwell in God's holy hill—namely Heaven—are only those who do not backbite with their tongue (see Psalm 15:1–3). So "those who are filled with envy, jealousy, and evil surmising, and who indulge in evilspeaking, make it manifest that *they are unfit for the kingdom of heaven* because they are not peacemakers."⁸ "Malice, guile, hypocrisy, envy, and evilspeaking are things which God abhors, and no one who reveals those fruits in his life will enter the kingdom of heaven."⁹

Terrible consequences

Many take it as a light matter to engage in these practices. But there are great consequences that follow this evil work, such as are not esteemed by those who engage in them. Its consequences bear not only upon the individuals but also upon the church as a whole.

Upon the one speaking: Regarding the slanderers, God declares, "Whoso privily slandereth his neighbour, him will I cut off" (Psalm 101:5). And describing His hatred against this grievous sin, the Lord says, "Thou sittest and speakest against thy brother; thou slanderest thine own mother's son. . . . Now consider this, ye that forget God, lest I tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver" (Psalm 50:20, 22).

There is no safety for those who do not have control over their tongue. It

will work disaster in those who help Satan in this work. God will not tolerate such an attitude. There is a curse attached to this work. The inspired pen says, "Evilspeaking is a *twofold curse, falling more heavily upon the speaker than upon the hearer.*"¹⁰

"God says to them, 'Thou hast left thy first love. . . . Repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly.' I will not bear long with your perverse spirit, which leads you to cherish envy and evil surmising. 'I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy

candlestick out of his place, except thou repent' (Revelation 2:4, 5)."¹¹

Upon the person that listens: Even when we are not the author of the act, if we indulge those who commit this sin by giving ear to such talk, we, too, are in danger! "There are those who go up and down as talebearers, accusing and condemning, blackening character, inspiring hearts with maliciousness. They carry false reports to the doors of their neighbors, who, as they listen to the slander, *lose the Spirit of God*. Not



even the messenger of God, who bears to the people His truth, is spared."¹²

"Many, eternally lost, will then, in their despair, look reproachfully upon those who sowed bitterness in their hearts and planted suspicious thoughts in their minds."¹³

"Those whose hearts are right with God will say: I cannot hear these evil reports."¹⁴

Upon the church: After their victory over Jericho, the Israelites had a very sad experience. They lost God's protection against their enemies and had not sufficient strength to defeat them. This was caused by the sin of one man: Achan had taken something that had been forbidden—yet the entire nation was held accountable for it (Joshua 7:11).

But in our churches, "there are those who cherish a spirit of envy and hatred against their brethren. . . . There are those who go up and down as talebearers, accusing and condemning, blackening character, inspiring hearts with maliciousness. . . . *This sin is worse than the sin of Achan.* Its influence is not confined to those who cherish it. It is a root of bitterness, whereby many are defiled. *God cannot bless the church till it is purged of this evil that corrupts minds and spirits, the souls of those who do not repent and change their course of action.*"¹⁵

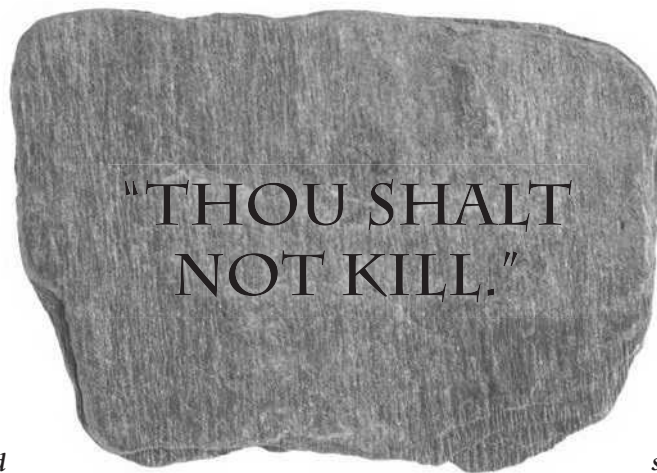
"*The Spirit can never be poured out* while variance and bitterness toward one another are cherished by the members of the church. Envy, jealousy, evil surmising, and evilspeaking are of Satan, and they effectually bar the way against the Holy Spirit's working."¹⁶

Speaking against leaders

Many church members make it a habit to defame the reputation of God's servants, but there are plenty of lessons in the Bible to warn us against this practice. The case of Miriam and Aaron (Numbers 12:1, 4, 9, 10) and that of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram (Numbers 16:1–32) should be studied carefully by those who are actuated by the same spirit. Korah and

his sympathizers perished as a result of their evil actions. Miriam, who herself was a prophet, was not spared when in a moment of selfishness and pride she engaged in a grievous work of evilspeaking against the Lord's appointed messenger. Yes, the one defamed may have indeed been her "little" brother, but that familiarity in no way excused her conduct in the sight of God.

"The Bible specially teaches us to beware of lightly bringing accusation against those whom God has called to act as His ambassadors. . . . He who has placed upon men the heavy responsibility of leaders and teachers of His people will hold the people accountable for the manner in which they treat His servants. We are to honor those whom God has honored. The judgment visited upon Miriam should be a rebuke to all who yield to jealousy, and murmur against those upon whom God lays the burden of His work."¹⁷



"The peril of speaking against the servants of God is also made manifest in the story of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram."¹⁸

In the event that a leader does commit a mistake, the Bible teaches us how such should be dealt with. We read, "Against an elder receive not an accusation, but before two or three witnesses" (1 Timothy 5:19). This does not include evil surmising, nor evilspeaking. But the principles established by Christ must be followed.

Action needed

We saw that because of the sin of Achan, God's displeasure rested upon

the entire congregation. In order to eradicate the evil, Achan—and even the members of his family—were stoned to death (Joshua 7:24–26). If this sin had to be dealt with in such a manner, how much more severely must we deal with that of evilspeaking, since it is worse than the sin of Achan? In Matthew 18:15–18 and Titus 3:10 are laid out the principles that should be followed:

"Let busybodies and accusers be visited and rebuked. If after thorough labor, they do not hold their tongues in check, *they should be suspended from church membership.*

"There are those members who are busybodies, speaking evil, sowing the seeds of doubt and infidelity, who pay no heed to the light God has given them in His Word. If we have but one church member who by his spirit, words, and influence seeks to counterwork the influence of the minister of Christ, labor with that one faithfully; and if after taking the steps required by Christ, he will not hear, will

not change his course of action, then separate him from the church, and let him know the reason why the church cannot hold him in her fellowship. . . .

"If there are those who sympathize with him, who will not discern the right from the wrong, who, after patient instruction has been given them, choose to keep on the wrong side, *let them also be suspended.* God's name must not be dishonored by murmurers, faultfinders, and those who are continually sowing seeds of disaffection."¹⁹

"Evilspeaking should be dealt with as a misdemeanor that is subject to church trial and separation from church membership if persisted in; for the church cannot be set in order in any other way."²⁰

Conclusion

God gives a clear admonition to us today: "Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice. and be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving

one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you" (Ephesians 4:31, 32). Knowing our sinful nature and tendencies toward evil, we need to pray as did Job, "Teach me, and I will hold my tongue: and cause me to understand wherein I have erred" (6:24). How terrible it is to engage in this work! We need the presence and the help of God in this regard.

"When you are almost ready to yield, to lose patience and self-control, to be hard and denunciatory, to find fault and accuse—this is the time for you to send to heaven the prayer, 'Help me, O God, to resist temptation, to put all bitterness and wrath and evilspeaking out of my heart. Give me Thy meekness, Thy lowliness, Thy long-suffering, and Thy love. Leave me not to dishonor my Redeemer, to misinterpret the words and motives of my wife, my children, and my brethren and sisters in the faith. Help me that I may be kind, pitiful, tenderhearted, forgiving.'"²¹

"Instead of finding fault with others, let us be critical with ourselves. Everyone should inquire, Is my heart right before God? Am I glorifying my heavenly Father? If you have cherished a wrong spirit, banish it from the soul. Eradicate from your heart everything that is of a defiling nature. Pluck up every root of bitterness, lest others be contaminated by the baleful



Without love, we tend to lose respect for our fellow-erring mortals. We see their shortcomings. . . . But to have such a harsh, unforgiving attitude is not in harmony with Christianity.

influence. Do not allow one poisonous plant to remain in the soil of your heart. Root it out this very hour, and cultivate in its stead the plant of love. Let Jesus be enshrined in the soul-temple. . . . 'If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us' (1 John 4:12)."²²

"My brethren and sisters, . . . let there be among you no accusing. This is the work of the enemy. If he can lead professing Christians to accuse and condemn, he is served as he desires to be. Let no one, by yielding to feelings of envy, weaken the hands of his brother, so that the work entrusted to him is marred.

"Be very careful how you carry reports. Often what you tell to others, though seeming to you to be truth, is misrepresentation. Thus false conclusions are formed. Thread after thread of misrepresentation is woven into the web, until the pattern is spoiled. Oh, how many hearts are grieved and wounded because of statements made by those who do not really know that what they report is true! How much pain is caused by cruel handling of reputation! The course of those who utter the slander would be just as dark if represented as they represent the course of the one whom they are accusing. . . .

"Often, when the Lord works upon a certain man's mind to do certain things for the advancement of His work, another man thinks that he can see defects in his fellow worker's efforts. Let him keep to his own work. The Lord, who sees the end from the beginning, will fulfil His purposes. He

will unite with the one to whom He has entrusted His work and will bring about its accomplishment. He knows just what is needed."²³

If we keep Christ always before us, seeing every human being as His exclusive property, we will, by His grace, keep our thoughts pure. And our words will always be "with grace, seasoned with salt" (Colossians 4:6). *R*

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Loving Loyalty

By P. Stemmler

Considering the Seventh Commandment

I do!" Do you remember saying those words? Have you watched with tearful emotion as others have said

those words in the marriage ceremony? They remind me of the response of the Israelite nation when the words of the covenant were spoken on Mt. Sinai, "All that the Lord hath spoken we will do" (Exodus 19:8)! But they failed miserably. So do many marriages. But why?

It is inherent in human nature to think we have power within us to keep our promises and do the "right" things. But human history and our own experience in personal relationships of many kinds show us otherwise.

As mentioned throughout the theme of this issue of the *Reformation Herald*, the Ten Commandments spoken from Mt. Sinai—instead of being a list of do's and don'ts given by an arbitrary leader—are, in fact, a list of magnifi-

cent promises given by our Redeemer and Lord, Jesus Christ, in connection with the loving and all-powerful Jehovah.

These are the promises of what will happen when in our own experience we give our heart to Christ, to be filled with His Spirit and be led by the same.

In our marriage relationship especially, this experience will be made manifest. Why in the marriage? It is the God-given example used by Christ and His disciples to show the close union that our Father wishes to have with His children. It is a symbol of our spiritual marriage with Christ. That is why the enemy of souls fights so much against the Sabbath and the marriage institution.

When we are truly united with Jesus, self is hid—in fact, it is dead—to wanting its own way and demanding its own rights. Instead, we will be waiting and wanting to know how we can best

serve our loving Lord. Submission is not a feeble, oppressed, sinking down under obligation to do what is "required," but, rather, it is a loving, willing, wanting to serve, obey, reverence, and respect the desires of Christ.

Please notice the scriptures that are given on this subject, speaking of the husband-and-wife union:

"Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God. Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body. Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing. Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that he might present it to himself a glorious church,

not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish. So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself. For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church: for we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church. Nevertheless let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself; and the wife see that she reverence her husband" (Ephesians 5:21–33).

What a sermon! If we would really, really look at these words, praying for understanding and grace to live them, what happy marriages, happy homes, happy people we would find. Of course, that would be heavenly, wouldn't it? But isn't that what we are to have—a little heaven on earth?

So then, why are there problems in relationships? It is because self is raising its ugly head, wanting its own way in one or both parts of the relationship. What is the cure? We must recognize the fact that maybe we are in some degree separated from Christ. It's time to quit casting blame on others and instead be praying and acting as Christ would have us do. When we are committed to a lifelong relationship with Christ, we are enabled by His grace to commit to a lifelong relationship with our spouse. When we really love our spouse, we will not commit adultery! Simple.

There are some very significant principles in the previous verses that should be highlighted here. They are synonymous with our relationship with Christ, so let's consider them:

Headship

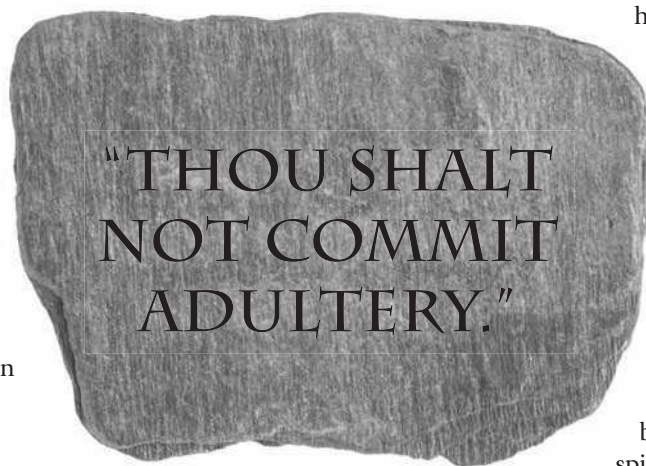
First, there must be a head. Christ was submitted to His Father, and we must be submitted to Christ. The husband must be under Christ's control and the wife under the headship of her

husband. As a wife, I call this my safety measure. I can trust that when decisions need to be made, if my husband is seeking God's will and praying for direction and I am doing the same, the Lord will guide us through His Spirit, and there will be agreement with my husband. What if there's not? We will address that in a moment.

Submission

Again, we see the principles in action. Christ was submissive to His Father's will in all things, not seeking His own way, doing all for the salvation of humanity and the honor of His Father. Do you remember how low and far He went? We read in Philippians 2:5–8, "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross."

The biblical principle for us is the same. We need to submit to Christ in all things, not seeking our own will,



but the will of Him who suffered and died for us.

When the husband is then submitted to the Lord, the wife—if she is also submitted to Christ—will submit to her husband. It must be understood that this is not the oppressed, doormat mentality, but it is rather a heartfelt willingness to let him lead. In our age, this deference—this yielding—is a hard

thing to digest. Historically, women have gone through many years of oppression, and now a so-called freedom has taken many women into wanting to be leaders, not followers.

We should realize that submission to the will of God and His order of relationships is the safest and happiest place to be. His ways are always the best. Just to help keep things in balance, please read the following verses with a view to determine how these principles can be put into practice in marriage and in all other relationships. Then we will be blessed by the Spirit of God: "Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others" (Philippians 2:3, 4).

Respect & love

We can see throughout Scripture that Christ respected, revered, and loved His Father and demonstrated this in all of His actions, His submission, and His words.

The apostle Paul brings out the same principle, especially in the husband/wife relationship in the verses that we have already read.

Husbands are told to love their wives. Isn't that what they would normally do? Actually—especially as the years go by—it may not be the most natural tendency in their disposition, and so Inspiration provides this reminder.

Wives are told to respect or reverence their husbands. Why aren't they told to love? Maybe by nature, women are more loving, but maybe, just maybe, we need Inspiration to tell us that we are to show consistent respect to our husbands. We must have a heart submitted to Christ, so that we are enabled to encourage, thank, and honor our husbands.

These factors are so unlike much of what we see in the world. We see individuals who are not submitted to Christ, but instead they want their own way and to be served. We see women wanting to tell their husbands what to do, and many times we see husbands weakly fol-



lowing or angrily reacting. We see men trying to order their wives around, and wives trying to stand for their rights. No wonder that the grass looks greener on the other side of the fence.

But God has a solution.

What if there are problems? And there are plenty in our time. Inspiration gives us some advice that is very practical in nature, yet may not necessarily bring instant results. The beautiful outcome may bloom only over time. . . .

I will share here only a few points and will trust that you will study more for yourselves to see how much the Lord can work for you and in you.

1. Love is a plant that needs to be cultivated. It takes sowing, tending, watering, nurturing. We need to ask the Lord to give us of His Spirit in our own heart and show us how to share it outwardly, beginning with our spouse.

2. Win by example: The first epistle of Peter shares a lot of counsel on this point to both husbands and wives. Let us read slowly, carefully, and prayerfully the following:

“Ye were as sheep going astray; but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls. Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands; that, if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the conversation of the wives; while they behold your chaste conversation coupled with

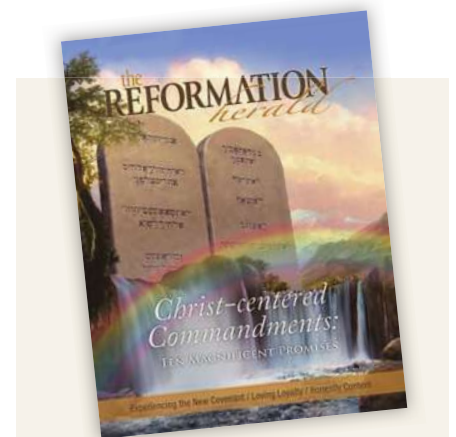
fear. Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel; but let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price. For after this manner in the old time the holy women also, who trusted in God, adorned themselves, being in subjection unto their own husbands: even as Sara obeyed Abraham, calling him lord: whose daughters ye are, as long as ye do well, and are not afraid with any amazement. Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered. Finally, be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another, love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous: not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing; but contrariwise blessing; knowing that ye are thereunto called, that ye should inherit a blessing. For he that will love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile” (1 Peter 2:25; 3:1–10).

What if one partner will not submit to this counsel? Paul addresses that, too: “If any brother hath a wife that believeth not, and she be pleased to dwell with him, let him not put her

away. And the woman which hath an husband that believeth not, and if he be pleased to dwell with her, let her not leave him. For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband: else were your children unclean; but now are they holy. But if the unbelieving depart, let him depart. A brother or a sister is not under bondage in such cases: but God hath called us to peace. For what knowest thou, O wife, whether thou shalt save thy husband? or how knowest thou, O man, whether thou shalt save thy wife?” (1 Corinthians 7:12–16).

Again, we are back to submission to Christ, enabling Him to live in and through us to the winning of souls. May God help us to be willing vessels that will show His Seventh promise to the world around us:

“Thou shalt not commit adultery”! *✍*



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The Eighth Commandment

By A. Balbach

When Mary Magdalene began to anoint the feet of Jesus, Judas protested: "Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence, and given to the poor? This he said, not that he cared for the poor; but because he was a thief, and had the bag, and bare what was put therein" (John 12:5, 6).

Judas was a deceiver. His cunning objection began a round of murmuring at the table, and Mary's devotion was looked upon as a wasteful expenditure. It was only after the cross that the disciples understood that Judas had no heart for the needy. He was sorry, not because a good amount of money was spent for the ointment, but for the fact that the money was not dropped into the bag that he was carrying as treasurer for the little company of disciples. Sad to say, he was not a faithful keeper of the eighth commandment. "From [the disciples'] little store [Judas] had secretly drawn for his own use."¹

"Thou shalt not steal"
(Exodus 20:15).

"The eighth commandment condemns manstealing and slave dealing, and forbids wars of conquest. It condemns theft and robbery. It demands

strict integrity in the minutest details of the affairs of life. It forbids overreaching in trade, and requires the payment of just debts or wages. It declares that every attempt to advantage oneself by the ignorance, weakness, or misfortune of another is registered as fraud in the books of heaven."²

Covetousness

Transgression of the eighth commandment is preceded by the sin of covetousness. Those who have a heart inclined to "covetous practices" (2 Peter 2:14) will resort to stealing sooner or later.

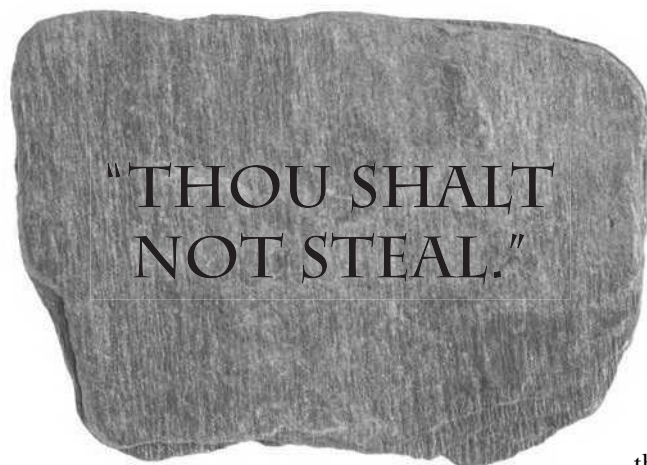
"Covetousness is an evil of gradual development. Achan had cherished

greed of gain until it became a habit, binding him in fetters well-nigh impossible to break. While fostering this evil, he would have been filled with horror at the thought of bringing disaster upon Israel; but his perceptions were deadened by sin, and when temptation came, he fell an easy prey.

"Are not similar sins still committed, in the face of warnings as solemn and explicit? We are as directly forbidden to indulge covetousness as was Achan to appropriate the spoils of Jericho. God has declared it to be idolatry. We are warned, 'Ye cannot serve God and mammon' (Matthew 6:24). 'Take heed, and beware of covetousness' (Luke 12:15). 'Let it not be once named among you' (Ephesians 5:3). We have before us the fearful doom of Achan, of Judas, of

Ananias and Sapphira. Back of all these we have that of Lucifer, the 'son of the morning' who, coveting a higher state, forfeited forever the brightness and bliss of heaven. And yet, notwithstanding all these warnings, covetousness abounds.

"Everywhere its slimy track is seen. It creates discontent and dissension in families; it excites envy and hatred in the poor against the rich; it prompts the grinding oppression of the rich



"If you attempt to beat a man down and so get his goods for less than a fair price, you are attempting to commit burglary as much as though you broke into his shop to take the things without paying for them."

toward the poor. And this evil exists not in the world alone, but in the church. How common even here to find selfishness, avarice, overreaching, neglect of charities, and robbery of God 'in tithes and offerings.' Among church members 'in good and regular standing' there are, alas! many Achans."³

"Achan had fostered covetousness and deception in his heart, until his perceptions of sin had become blunted, and he fell an easy prey to temptation. Those who venture to indulge in a known sin will be more readily overcome the second time. The first transgression opens the door to the tempter, and he gradually breaks down all resistance and takes full possession of the citadel of the soul. Achan had listened to oft-repeated warnings against the sin of covetousness. The law of God, pointed and positive, had forbidden stealing and all deception, but he continued to cherish sin. As he was not detected and openly rebuked, he grew bolder; warnings had less and less effect upon him, until his soul was bound in chains of darkness."⁴

"If a man will sue you ..."

On one occasion, a man who revealed a narrow-minded character came up to the Master and asked Jesus to

intervene in the solution of a problem he had with his brother concerning the division of the property inherited from their father. Thinking that his brother had defrauded him, he pleaded with Christ: "Speak to my brother, that he divide the inheritance with me" (Luke 12:13). These two brothers were quarreling because both were covetous, selfish, and inclined to defraud one another. Christ refused to intervene. He had already laid down a rule pointing out the best way to solve a dispute where two individuals claim to be the legal owner of something.

Instead of going to court, this is what a follower of Christ will do: "And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloke also" (Matthew 5:40).

An ancient parable criticizes going to court for justice. Two cats could not agree between themselves how to divide a piece of cheese. So, they asked a cunning monkey to be their judge. He cut the cheese in half and put each piece on opposite sides of a balancing scale. Looking at the two cats, he told them that one piece of cheese outweighed the other. He immediately bit off a piece from it, in order, as he told them, to make the shares equal. But then the second

piece became too heavy. For the same reason, the monkey also bit off a mouthful from the second piece. Stop! Stop! Cried the two cats, when they saw that they were about to lose all of the cheese by going to law for a problem that they should have been thoughtful enough to settle between themselves. I see that you are not content, but I must meet my own needs in order to be just, my friends, the monkey said. And then he ate the rest of the cheese.

This is never to suggest that we should take the law into our own hands. Only that we should avoid conflict whenever we reasonably can.

In South Africa, two brothers went to the law with the same problem that Christ was asked to resolve (Luke 12:13). The judge, Paul Kruger, listened to both and gave them the following advice: One of you will divide the inheritance into two parts and the other will choose the part that he prefers. With this decision, the judge made sure that justice was done to both and that neither one of them would be defrauded.

Two farmers in the U.S. quarreled over the fence between their farms. One farmer argued that the fence gave one foot of his farm to the neighbor. The other farmer argued that the fence was where it should be. Finally the neighbor that did not want to move the fence sold his farm rather than fight over the matter in court. The new owner was approached by the same neighbor with the same complaint. He listened carefully and asked: "How many feet of this property belong to you? I would like to know that before the fence can be moved." The neighbor said: "One foot." "Only one foot? Then take two." The neighbor said: "I am claiming only one." The new owner insisted on giving two feet of land. Finally, the complaining neighbor suggested that the fence should remain where it already stood. In this way the principle taught by Jesus in Matthew 5:40 prevailed successfully as it was applied by the new owner.



The publicans

The Jews looked at the publicans with hatred because, when these men got into their position, they became rich in a short time. Everybody knew that they collected taxes not only for Caesar but also for themselves. In this sense they were thieves. Some of them were not beyond the reach of the Holy Spirit, however. Zacchaeus was one of them.

“Zacchaeus stood, and said unto the Lord; Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken any thing from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold. And Jesus said unto him, This day is salvation come to this house, forso-much as he also is a son of Abraham” (Luke 19:8, 9).

True Christians will remember what is written in Romans 13:7, 8 also when filling out their income tax forms.

Cunning forms of stealing

I once spoke with a man who was well acquainted with the problems connected with the work in the gold mines in South Africa, and he told me an unforgettable story. A foreman had to leave his workers without supervision for some time. And he knew what would happen with those men. They would stop working as soon as he would leave. Some would take a nap, some would lounge over the tiny cafe table, and some would probably get together in a small group to tell stories, make wisecracks, and laugh. So, what did the foreman do? He warned the employees: “You will not idle away your time during my absence. My eye will be watching you.” He immediately pulled out his glass eye and put it in a corner while the bewildered and ignorant workers were watching him. This was the way he tried to prevent them from stealing the time for which they got paid.

We ought to be careful when we bargain, not to cheat the seller. Sometimes the seller will sell his product at a loss, or below the cost price, because he must have the money to meet an urgent need. I must confess that, before my conversion, I had a covetous tendency to bargain harshly. Henry W. Beecher had something to say about those who have a morbid custom to



bargain too much when they want to buy something. Beecher writes:

“If you attempt to beat a man down and so get his goods for less than a fair price, you are attempting to commit burglary as much as though you broke into his shop to take the things without paying for them.”

The devil may tempt us also in the domain of salaries. Demanding excessive payment by covetous skillful workers has something to do with violating the eighth commandment. So does paying poor wages to common farm laborers by covetous farmers who want to become rich.

“Behold, the hire of the labourers who have reaped down your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth: and the cries of them which have reaped are entered into the ears of the Lord of sabaoth” (James 5:4).

Tithes and offerings

The Lord speaks to us through the ministry of Malachi:

“Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings” (Malachi 3:8).

The idea that tithe paying is not a biblical requirement devolving upon Christians because we are not living

under the levitical priesthood is not a concept that is supported by the New Testament.

We read that “Jesus [was] made an high priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec” (Hebrews 6:20). But we read that the priesthood after the order of Melchisedec is also sustained by tithes. Read Hebrew 7:1, 2. For this reason, you may ask: Through whom and how do we pay our tithes to our High Priest? The Bible answers:

“And here men that die receive tithes; but there he receiveth them, of whom it is witnessed that he liveth” (Hebrews 7:8; see also Revelation 2:8).

May God help us to be honest in our relationship and dealing with others. May He help us to return a faithful tithe, to offer or ask for fair wages, and to bargain with an interest in being fair to both sides. Don't use the law and the courts to take advantage of others. Don't take the eighth commandment superficially. *R*

References

¹ *The Desire of Ages*, p. 559.

² *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 309.

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 496, 497.

⁴ *The SDA Bible Commentary* [E. G. White Comments], vol. 2, p. 997.

Honestly content

By T. Stockler

Considering the Ninth and Tenth Commandments

The first four commandments of the Decalogue outline the specific, authentic, earnest, structured relationship our Creator desires to have with each of us. The next four commandments address the appreciation and respect for authority, life, marriage, and private property that God requires of the individual. The last two commandments describe our community life. They are the only two commandments to mention our neighbors, that is, the people around us. In forbidding us to be destructive to our communities, God gives us the ability to communicate well with (ninth commandment) and the ability to live actively and contentedly with (tenth commandment) the rest of humanity in the final demands of His law.

The ninth commandment forbids falsehood in communication: Do not speak falsely to or about other humans. By forbidding or criminalizing false communication, the commandment demands healthy and clear communication. It requires us to communicate well when it forbids us to do it wrongly. And many of us are

forced to admit that we do not communicate well. Marriages, parent-child relationships, businesses, communities, cultures, and nations suffer from poor and fraudulent communication.

We often make excuses for poor communication. In our age we depend on experts to do our living for us. The mechanic understands our car. The builder understands our house. The doctor understands our health. The lawyer does our arguing for us. And the pastor takes care of our religion. All too often, we have outsourced our life to others. We expect to only focus on one project and make enough money from our career to pay for the expertise of everyone else.

This is not the richness and success in life that God offers us. He invites us to live a full and enjoyable life without living through other people. He gives us a life of participation and action, not a life of being a spectator. When God gives us the gift of life, He never gives us a second rate product based on second-hand living. It is true that He intends us to consult those with more expertise in order to educate ourselves. But it is also true that He expects us to make our own decisions and experience the

consequences of our decisions.

“Higher than the highest human thought can reach is God’s ideal for His children. Godliness—godlikeness—is the goal to be reached. Before the student there is opened a path of continual progress. He has an object to achieve, a standard to attain, that includes everything good, and pure, and noble. He will advance as fast and as far as possible in every branch of true knowledge. But his efforts will be directed to objects as much higher than mere selfish and temporal interests as the heavens are higher than the earth.”¹

In Satan’s way of life, experts make our decisions for us. In God’s way of life, experts assist us in educating ourselves so that we can make the decisions. In Satan’s way of life, we drift from circumstances to circumstances and from expert to expert. In God’s way of life, we become so firmly rooted in Jesus that all of the winds and rain the devil can dump on us will never move us. God never meant for experts to communicate for us. He meant for us to communicate for ourselves. God never meant for us to depend on others to communicate for us. He has provided for each Christian to become a master of communication.

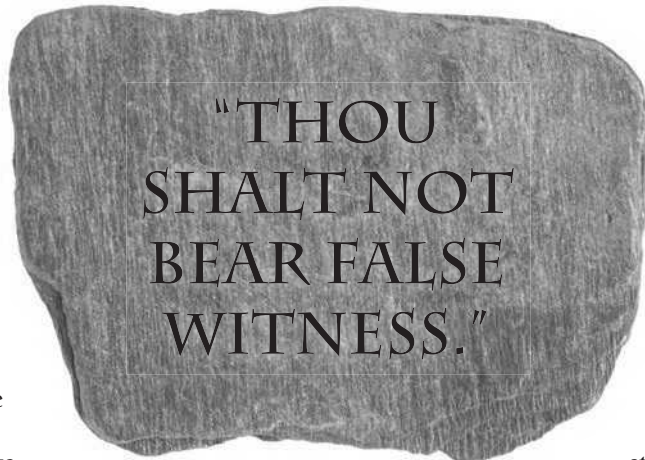
Learning to express ourselves

"Every Christian is called to make known to others the unsearchable riches of Christ; therefore he should seek for perfection in speech. He should present the word of God in a way that will commend it to the hearers. God does not design that His human channels shall be uncouth. It is not His will that man shall belittle or degrade the heavenly current that flows through him to the world."²

Some of us, like Moses over 3,000 years ago, have already started bringing out our collection of excuses. We open them up to God and expect Him to submit to us. We don't believe our family and friends and neighbors will listen to us. But we expect God to listen to us, and we expect Him to ignore our responsibility to communicate well to others. We believe we cannot say much about what is holy, but we are experts in sharing all sorts of unholy stories. We believe that we cannot say much about God, but we are experts in talking about ourselves. God is too wise for our excuses. After all, the man with the loudest excuses in the Bible wrote the biggest portion of that book! Moses offered the boldest excuses about being unable to communicate. Yet he communicated to us almost one fourth of the entire Bible. God loves us, but He hates our excuses. Let us be wary of offering our excuses to God.

But the certainty that God wants us to communicate does not mean that talking or writing comes easy to every one of us. In 1880, George King wanted to be a Seventh-day Adventist minister. He wanted to preach to hundreds of people. But to James White, this 33-year-old man was too poor of a speaker to be a minister. When George got up to preach his first sermon to a few people gathered in Richard Godsmark's living room, George became the slave of his own nervousness. He sounded terribly confused and confusing. When this King finished, he fled from the

room. No one had the heart to tell him that he should never preach. But no one wanted to hear another sermon out of him either. So, Hulda Godsmark suggested that he should go visit the neighbors. It was clear to her that Brother King was not called to preach from a pulpit. He could not hold the attention of a crowd.



But maybe he could go to the homes of the people and preach to them around their firesides. George could give away tracts and talk the truth to people where they were.

George King earned 62 cents for his first week. (That would be the equivalent of \$50 in 2014 monetary value.) By the next week, he was selling all of the literature he could carry. He made a comfortable living, and he started the Seventh-day Adventist colporteur work. George King was not suitable for public speaking when he started out. But God used him to bless many people by his quiet, personal conversations about the

truth he loved. George King is evidence that God can use anyone to communicate if that person will ask God for help.

We do not all excel at communicating through the same method, but God will help each one of us excel at communication. God loves variety. He loves variety in our communication. Some can communicate meaningfully to large crowds. Others are better at talking around the dinner table.

Still others can communicate best through music, or art. Let us each learn to identify where we are best at communicating and do it to honor God. The ninth commandment promises us that God will assist us in honest communication.

"As the will of man cooperates with the will of God, it becomes omnipotent. Whatever is to be done at His command may be accomplished in His strength."³

Let your music be honest and noble. Let your artistic expression be honest and benevolent. Let your poetry and your prose be honest and eloquent. Whatever your facial expression, or your body language, or your tongue, or your computer typing, or your clothes, or your sense of style communicates, let it be honest and let it glorify God.

God loves to hear us communicate. He is so happy when we talk to each other that He has written down what we say. "Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another: and the Lord hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the Lord,

To be honest is to state what is truthful when it is convenient and when it is not. . . . Appreciating what others have achieved may be wonderful stimulation to achieve more ourselves.

and that thought upon his name" (Malachi 3:16). God loves those that "speak" "the truth in their heart" (Psalm 15:2). God loves them so much that He will take those that speak the truth from their heart to live with Him (verse 1).

The heart of honesty

God hates dishonest communication. "These six things doth the Lord hate: yea, seven are an abomination unto him: a proud look, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, an heart that deviseth wicked imaginations, feet that be swift in running to mischief, a false witness that speaketh lies, and he that soweth discord among brethren" (Proverbs 6:16-19). Those that do not tell the truth will never live with Him. "He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son. But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death" (Revelation 21:7, 8).

To be honest is to state what is truthful when it is convenient and when it is not. Honesty does not mean we should be careless or thoughtless in how we tell the truth. It does not mean we must tell all we know. Many times silence is the wisest and most honest course. Honesty means we must tell



what must be told as kindly and honestly as God helps us to accomplish.

"False speaking in any matter, every attempt or purpose to deceive our neighbor, is here included [in the ninth commandment]. An intention to deceive is what constitutes falsehood. By a glance of the eye, a motion of the hand, an expression of the countenance, a falsehood may be told as effectually as by words. All intentional overstatement, every hint or insinuation calculated to convey an erroneous or exaggerated impression, even the statement of facts in such a manner as to mislead, is falsehood. This precept forbids every effort to injure our neighbor's reputation by misrepresentation or evil surmising, by slander or tale bearing. Even the intentional suppression of truth, by which injury may result to others, is a violation of the ninth commandment."⁴

But there is a deeper point to this commandment. We communicate what we have in our heart. Out of us comes a revelation of who we are. "Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit" (Matthew 7:17, 18). "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh" (Matthew 12:34). "A good man

out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is evil: for of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaketh" (Luke 6:45). "That which cometh out of the man, that defileth the man" (Mark 7:20).

How does honesty happen?

Honesty is the result of God changing our heart. It is the result of studying the life of God until we become honest like He is honest. God gives us the power to never misrepresent another human being. Let us submit to God and keep His commandment out of a heart filled with love for our neighbors on this little ball in space: Do not bear false witness.

From covetousness to contentment

The tenth commandment forbids covetousness: do not desire what others are or have or do. By forbidding or criminalizing any desire for what other humans have, the commandment demands us to do our best in our own circumstances and to be content with what we are able to be and do. This is not a passive contentment. We are to "consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works" (Hebrews 10:24). Appreciating what others have achieved may be wonderful stimulation to achieve more ourselves. But let us never desire someone else's hard work to replace our own contribution to this world.

We all too often make excuses also for our discontentment. We look at circumstances and feel like life controls us. We complain about the weather, and about each other, and about almost anything else we can find to talk about. The final commandment requires us to be active contributors and not active complainers.

"For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat" (2 Thessalonians 3:10). "His lord answered and said unto him, Thou wicked and slothful servant, thou knewest that I reap where I sowed not, and gather where I have not strawed: thou oughtest



therefore to have put my money to the exchangers, and then at my coming I should have received mine own with usury. Take therefore the talent from him, and give it unto him which hath ten talents. For unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance: but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath. And cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth" (Matthew 25:26–30). "And another came, saying, Lord, behold, here is thy pound, which I have kept laid up in a napkin: for I feared thee, because thou art an austere man: thou takest up that thou layedst not down, and reapest that thou didst not sow. And he saith unto him, Out of thine own mouth will I judge thee, thou wicked servant. Thou knewest that I was an austere man, taking up that I laid not down, and reaping that I did not sow: wherefore then gavest not thou my money into the bank, that at my coming I might have required mine own with usury? And he said unto them that stood by, Take from him the pound, and give it to him that hath ten pounds. (And they said unto him, Lord, he hath ten pounds.) For I say unto you, That unto every one which hath shall be given; and from him that hath not, even that he hath shall be taken away from him" (Luke 19:20–26).

"The physical, mental, and moral powers are the endowments of God and are to be appreciated and cultivated. We are here on probation, in training for the higher life. All heaven is waiting to cooperate with those who will be subordinate to the ways and will of God. God gives grace, and He expects all to use it. He supplies the power if the human mind feels any need or any disposition to receive. He never asks us to do anything without supplying the grace and power to do that very thing. All His biddings are enablings."⁵

Solomon looked at all that had happened or could have happened and concluded that personal accomplishment was one of the good things that God gave us. He puts rejoicing together with doing; attitude with action. These together meet the demands of the tenth commandment.



"He hath made every thing beautiful in his time: also he hath set the world in their heart, so that no man can find out the work that God maketh from the beginning to the end. I know that there is no good in them, but for a man to rejoice, and to do good in his life. And also that every man should eat and drink, and enjoy the good of all his labour, it is the gift of God" (Ecclesiastes 3:11–13).

Accomplishment with contentment: that is what means to never covet our fellow human's house, spouse, employees, or machines (or animals). And this is again possible, by the grace of God. He is the Source of the spirit of service and the spirit of contentment. "The tenth commandment strikes at the very

root of all sins, prohibiting the selfish desire, from which springs the sinful act. He who in obedience to God's law refrains from indulging even a sinful desire for that which belongs to another will not be guilty of an act of wrong toward his fellow creatures."⁶

May God help us to live as a blessing to our neighbors by our honest communication and our contented, unselfish, and hardworking lives. *R*

References

- ¹ *Education*, pp. 18, 19.
- ² *Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 336.
- ³ *Ibid.*, p. 333.
- ⁴ *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 309.
- ⁵ *The Review and Herald*, November 9, 1897.
- ⁶ *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 309.



Madagascar

Newly baptized members and friends, January 2014.

Kenya

Missionary school graduates, January 2014 (middle).

U.S.A.

The ground breaking ceremony held in Roanoke, Virginia, September 2013 (bottom).



Seychelles

*A group of believers,
March 2014.*

Nigeria

*Dedication of a new
chapel in Aba, Abia
State, December
2013 (middle).*

Brazil

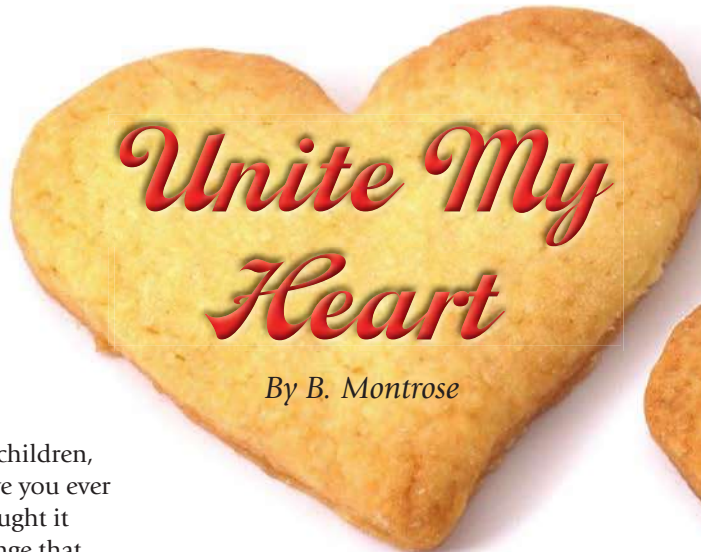
*Summer vacation
youth canvassing
program, February
2014 (bottom).*



MOVING? Please let us know.



CHILDREN'S
CORNER



By B. Montrose



Lear children, have you ever thought it strange that not everybody in the world loves and obeys God? If you are growing up with Christians, you are learning about your wonderful Father in heaven. You are also learning about how the One who made the whole universe came to this world as a little baby. He lived as a child, became an adult, and lived a perfect life. He finally allowed Himself to be hung with His hands and feet nailed onto a big wooden cross. Why? It was so that we could be forgiven for all our mistakes and wrong thoughts, words, and actions.

Maybe you are also learning about the Spirit of God, who is here today. Even though He is invisible, you can see how He works. The Holy Spirit helps us and others change from being selfish and naughty to become kindhearted and obedient.

But now, what about those people we mentioned who do not obey God? Why don't they love Him as we do? Some just plainly choose to be stubborn and refuse to allow the Spirit of God to soften their heart. But others honestly don't know any better. Part of our duty is to help them see and understand God's love for them.

Will things always be this way? There is an interesting passage in the Bible

that says: "All nations whom thou hast made shall come and worship before thee, O Lord; and shall glorify thy name" (Psalm 86:9).

In the hour of judgment after Christ's return, everyone who has ever been born will finally admit that the Creator had been good and fair to them. They were not made as robots—they had been given freedom of choice and they will admit that in their lifetime God had given them plenty of chances to be saved. Why will they then worship Him at that moment? The next verse explains the simple reason why:

"For thou art great, and doest wondrous things: thou art God alone" (verse 10).

When the psalmist thought about this carefully, he also felt inspired with the fact that he would like to learn more about God. So, he prayed, "Teach me thy way, O Lord." Then he also made a promise, "I will walk in thy truth."

But then he suddenly prayed for help: "unite my heart to fear thy name" (verse 11).

"Unite my heart?" What does it mean to unite something? It shows that something that has somehow been broken or divided needs to be put back together again.

Do you have a divided heart? Many of us do. We want to follow God and obey what He says, but there's another part of us that somehow wants to do whatever we want. Does everyone experience this? Most have faced this problem at some time.

But when Jesus was on earth, He made sure that His heart would not be divided, even when things were extremely hard for Him. At the time of greatest crisis when He knew He had chosen to allow Himself to be separated from His heavenly Father and suffer a horrible death to pay the price for our sins, He prayed, "O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt" (Matthew 26:39).

Jesus did not want to have a divided heart—and neither should we. Whatever the cost, whatever the suffering, whatever we must face, let us ask for God's help to have a united heart to fear His name. Like everything else He can do, He can help us with that, too! *R*