

The Tenth Commandment

Romans 8:1,2

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The Tenth Commandment internalizes the Law. If it were not for this commandment we might think that the law goes only to the body. We might think that just showing up for church, resting on the 7th day, not stealing or refraining from murder and the crime of adultery would be enough. It is this commandment that internalized the law. I want to point out some very important things that the Apostle Paul says about the law in Romans 7, and then speak of his resolution in Romans 8:1,2.

I. Paul said that he had not known lust except the law said, "Thou shalt not covet." Think about that for a minute.

- a. Sin is so deceptive that the heart will not discover it naturally. Sin is impervious to reason, because it has made reason its servant. It is impervious to emotion for the same reason. The natural man will accept defects and shortcoming, for he doesn't really consider himself responsible for these, but he gets excited when he is called a sinner, for he is accountable for his sins.
- b. Paul is showing that the root of sin is not in ignorance or in defect, but in sinful desire. "Lust" is the word. Evil desires for another's wealth, another's servants, or houses, or lands, or positions, or wives, or fame, or _____ is our problem
- c. This is why covetousness is called idolatry in the Bible. Note the following passages:

Ezekiel 33:31 And they come unto thee as the people cometh, and they sit before thee as my people, and they hear thy words, but they will not do them: for with their mouth they shew much love, but their heart goeth after their covetousness.

Habakkuk 2:9 Woe to him that coveteth an evil covetousness to his house, that he may set his nest on high, that he may be delivered from the power of evil!

Mark 7:21-23 For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, 22 Thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: 23 All these evil things come from within, and defile the man.

Luke 12:15 And he said unto them, Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth.

Romans 1:29 Being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication,

wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers,
Ephesians 5:3 But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints;
Colossians 3:5 Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry:
1 Thessalonians 2:5 For neither at any time used we flattering words, as ye know, nor a cloke of covetousness; God is witness:
Hebrews 13:5 Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.
2 Peter 2:3 And through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you: whose judgment now of a long time lingereth not, and their damnation slumbereth not.

d. This sinful desire is so deceitful that only the law of God and the Spirit of God will enlighten us and make us aware that it dwells in us

II. The enlightenment that Paul speaks of here is much deeper than the tension that the pagan world recognized about the conflict between the body and the mind. This tension was the result of the work of the Holy Spirit in Paul, and the beginning of new life in Him. It was a tension that begins by the work of the Holy Spirit and continues until the resurrection of the body. It is a tension that is between what he brought from the womb as a son of Adam, and that which was born in him by the Holy Spirit. This tension is described in Galatians 5:

16 This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh.
17 For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would.
18 But if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law.
19 Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness,
20 Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies,
21 Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.
22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith,
23 Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.
24 And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts.
25 If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.
26 Let us not be desirous of vain glory, provoking one another, envying one another.

III. Every act of sin is an act of a slave.

- a. You will not begin to make progress in your Christian life until you understand this. “I know that in me, that is in my flesh, there dwelleth no good thing,” Paul says. But this is not the slavery of force or violence to the man, but a willing slavery. We sin because we choose sin. The bondage is so pervasive and so deceitful that we do not even realize sin’s presence, unless our eyes are opened by the Holy Spirit. “There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death,” Solomon said. Paul did not consider himself a sinner when he persecuted the church. No, he thought that he was doing God service. Without the law, Paul would have remained in his state of self-congratulation and contentment. He was “alive without the law,” as he put it. But the law woke him from his slumbers and drove Him to Christ.
- b. But the Christian is only partially under the dominion of sin—only with respect to what he brought from the womb in his natural birth. If he is a child of God something new has been created in him, a newness of the Spirit of God. Paul says that this slavery is only with respect to the flesh, because the “law of the spirit has made me free from the law of sin and death.”
- c. This means that the Christian is not free from sin totally, for sin yet dwells in his flesh; but neither is the Christian totally under the power and control of sin, because he is a new man in Christ.
- d. Every Christian knows this tension and is unhappy because of it.

IV. But The Christian, though not yet totally delivered from sin, is free from condemnation. This brings us to Romans 8:1,2. I want to say several things to make my point this afternoon.

- a. Christians labor in imperfection, for sin is always present with us. One of the most awful sermons that was ever preached was John Wesley’s sermon on Christian Perfection. It is still widely read. Perfectionism has plagued the church in America in particular and was always present in the great revivals, particularly those of Charles Finney and the Second Great Awakening. It has left ruin and destruction behind it. Let the Apostle John answer, “If any man say he has no sin, he deceives himself, and the truth is not in him.” [I John 1] Truth can exist along side of sin in the believer, but it cannot produce blindness. Those that are so blind so as not to admit sin, are alienated from the truth.
- b. The mercy of God is sufficient for sinners such as we are, and those who believe are fully forgiven for all their sins—let us not call them mistakes, or errors, or faults. Let us call them what they are: sins. Our sins are fully forgiven us in Jesus Christ.
- c. This forgiveness is contingent upon one thing, and one thing alone: faith in Jesus Christ. This is what “walking after the Spirit” means—it means that we

do not depend upon our works, but upon the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. This is what Paul means in verse 2: “The law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death.” Calvin says on this verse: This is a confirmation of the former sentence; and that it may be understood, the meaning of the words must be noticed. Using a language not strictly correct, by the law of the Spirit he designates the Spirit of God, who sprinkles our souls with the blood of Christ, not only to cleanse us from the stain of sin with respect to its guilt, but also to sanctify us that we may be really purified.

- d. The Heidelberg Catechism says this about the Tenth Commandment:

Q113: What does the tenth Commandment require?

A113: That not even the least inclination or thought against any commandment of God ever enter our heart, but that with our whole heart we continually hate all sin and take pleasure in all righteousness.

Q114: Can those who are converted to God keep these Commandments perfectly?

A114: No, but even the holiest men, while in this life, have only a small beginning of such obedience, yet so that with earnest purpose they begin to live not only according to some, but according to all the Commandments of God.

Q115: Why then does God so strictly enjoin the Ten Commandments upon us, since in this life no one can keep them?

A115: First, that as long as we live we may learn more and more to know our sinful nature, and so the more earnestly seek forgiveness of sins and righteousness in Christ; second, that without ceasing we diligently ask God for the grace of the Holy Spirit, that we be renewed more and more after the image of God, until we attain the goal of perfection after this life.

V. What do these things mean?

- a. Let us rejoice in the wonderful forgiveness of sins that we have in Jesus Christ.
- b. Let us not be weary in well-doing, for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.
- c. Let us mourn our bondage to sin, confess it before the Lord, and walk in humility and lowliness of mind—not seeking to lord it over others, or promote our own self-righteousness.
- d. Let us not stray from Christ and His grace, for there is no forgiveness, no power, and no protection from sin apart from Him. To know your own sinful desires and to know the power of sin will cause you to realize how weak you are and how needful it is for you to walk in the way of faith and dependence upon Christ. “Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh.” The lust of the flesh will still be present, but in Christ you can walk in godliness despite the flesh and its desires.

There is much more that could be said, but I have given you the kernel.

May God bless you. Amen.