

08 - The Fourth Commandment Part 2 - Exodus 20:8-11 - 2014-03-16

Call to Worship: Psalm 84:10

Scripture Reading: Revelation 1:9-18

Sermon: "The Fourth Commandment Part 2" Exodus 20:8-11; Romans 2:14-15

Benediction: Psalm 84:11-12

INTRODUCTION

No one will be justified in God's sight by law keeping!
(elaborate)

Last time we considered

- what we are to do: remember the sabbath day to hallow it
- how we are to do it: six days do work; the sabbath day, don't work
- why we are to do it: God instituted it when He created us

This time we consider one of the difficulties we have with the Sabbath commandment: We lack confidence that we are supposed to obey it.

- is it really for all mankind? Maybe it is just for Israel, just for the Jews.
- is it really still in effect in the New Covenant church of Jesus Christ? Didn't it expire with the passing of the Old Covenant?
- Is it really for me, since I am not under law but under grace?
- Is it really for me, since the letter of the law kills, and it is the spirit that gives life?
- is it really for me, a matter of right and wrong, or is it just a matter of personal discretion or preference?
- Is it really for me, a commandment from God, or is it just what my preacher wants?
- Is it really for me, or is it just an old Puritan thing?

In America, especially in the south, including here in Texas, Christians in general used to have more confidence in the commandment that we do now. The confidence was lost somewhat recently, but not real recently.

You may have experienced this loss of confidence in your own life
You may have been brought up after this loss of confidence already occurred.

The loss of it among Baptists in the south, taken as a group, has been documented.

Among Baptists in the south, this loss of confidence is documented to have occurred between 1963 and 2000.

1963 revision of the BFM

The first day of the week is the Lord's Day. It is a Christian institution for regular observance. It commemorates the resurrection of Christ from the dead and **should be employed in exercises of worship and spiritual devotion, both public and private, and by refraining from worldly amusements, and resting from secular employments**, work of necessity and mercy only being excepted.

2000 revision of the BFM

The first day of the week is the Lord's Day. It is a Christian institution for regular observance. It commemorates the resurrection of Christ from the dead and **should include exercises of worship and spiritual devotion, both public and private. Activities on the Lord's Day should be commensurate with the Christian's conscience** under the Lordship of Jesus Christ.

Having identified that we have this weakness, let us do some analysis of where exactly the weakness is in our conscience.

If we identify the areas of weakness in our conscience that cause us to lack confidence in this commandment, we will be equipped to obey the commandment in love to Christ, and so enjoy its benefits, to the glory of God.

BODY

I. It is easier for the conscience to see the rightness of commands in the second table of the law than commands in the first table of the law

A. Explain the two tables

B. Consider how confident we are that the commands of the first table apply to us, and why

1. There is a consensus among us all regarding these things, so of course I agree with these commandments

a. ask anyone, "Is it wrong for a child to mouth off to his mother?"

b. ask anyone, "Is it wrong to murder someone?"

c. "Is it wrong for your wife to cheat on you?"

d. "Is it wrong for someone to rob you?"

e. "Is it wrong for someone to tell lies about you?"

Go to any country in the world and ask everyone there these questions. 95 or 99 out of 100 people will agree on what is right and wrong.

I don't have a lack of confidence that these commandments apply to me

2. To break these laws is an offense against me and my kind, so of course I agree with these commandments

a. In each of these commandments, there is wrong done to human beings, either me or someone else of my kind, another human being

b.

3. To some extent, these are even the civil laws of my own elected government
 - in Texas, a person younger than 18 years old has to have his parent's consent to get a driver's license or get married; in America, a person younger than 18 has to have his parent's consent to join the military
 - murder is of course a crime in every state, along with other kinds of at-fault killing, such as manslaughter
 - adultery and other kinds of sexual deviancy are either crimes or grounds for at-fault divorce; we know a woman in Texas who was sued for divorce by her husband just a few years ago, but the judge saw that he had been adulterous, and so awarded alimony to the wife on the grounds of adultery
 - stealing in several of its forms is of course a crime
 - perjury and defamation and libel are all crimes or grounds for civil lawsuits

We see in these things that we do not have much trouble being sure that the commands of the second table, regarding our conduct toward our fellow human beings, apply to us today, that we must obey them.

C. Consider how differently the human race sees the laws of the first table

1. There's no consensus among men regarding these things
 - a. that there is just one true God, and He alone must be worshiped. Go to all the countries of the world and ask, and you'll find that the people of the world worship many different gods.
 - b. There's no consensus that God must not be worshiped by idols.
 - c. There's no consensus among men that the names by which God is known should not be used lightly, flippantly, irreverently, should not be taken in vain.
 - d. So regarding the sabbath commandment, we do not feel the weight of it in the consensus of all mankind; mankind does not agree that this is a matter of right and wrong
2. To break these laws is not an offense against me and my kind
 - a. I'm not directly hurt by someone worshiping other gods, or making images for worship, or taking the Lord's name in vain
 - b. so regarding the sabbath commandment, we do not feel the weight of it in any offense against us personally or against our race
3. The civil laws of my own government generally don't address these things
 - a. no one is arrested for worshiping false gods
 - b. it is not illegal to worship using God using some visual art to represent Him
 - c. it is not illegal to take the name of the Lord in vain (in most places)
 - d. there are some laws regarding doing business on the Lord's Day, but not many anymore
 - e. so regarding the sabbath commandment, we do not feel the weight of it

in any government laws about it

I say all this to point out to you that some of how we feel regarding the sabbath commandment, how it seems somehow less clear to us that we need to obey it, comes from the difference between laws of the second table, which are about offense toward us, and laws of the first table, which are about offense toward God.

D. This, however, does not indicate a weakness in the sabbath commandment, but a weakness in our own conscience.

1. if it is an offense against me, I see that it is wrong, but if it is an offense against God, I don't feel so strongly that it's wrong; this is a weakness in the conscience; strengthen that particular place in your conscience by use of this commandment;

2. if it is something my whole race requires, I see clearly that it is my duty to do it; but if God requires it, I'm not quite so sure I need to do it; this is a weakness in the conscience; strengthen that particular place in your conscience by use of this commandment;

3. if it is required by state law, I see clearly that it is my duty to do it; but if it is required by God's law, I don't see my obligation so clearly; this is a weakness in the conscience; strengthen that particular place in your conscience by use of this commandment;

This does not make the laws of the first table less authoritative than the laws of the second table.

So, it is easier for the conscience to see the rightness of commands in the second table of the law than commands in the first table of the law

II. It is easier to see the rightness of commands we know by nature than the rightness of commands we don't know by nature, but have to be told

A. examples

1. law regarding my neighbor's life and property

a. I must not harm my next-door neighbor or his property

i. I know this innately

ii. If ever I am told this, I easily agree that it is right

b. I must not fire a gun in the city limits, even a bb gun (I am not defending the rightness of having such a law; but it is in fact the law.)

i. I do not know this innately

ii. If ever I am told this, I don't easily agree that it is right

a) is the person who told me this right that it is a law?

b) if this really is a law, am I sure I'm understanding the intent of it rightly?

c) is it still in force, or has it maybe been repealed?

- d) no one seems to care about enforcing it
- e) does the city council really have the right, the authority to make this a law?
- f) my uncle said you don't really have to abide by it
- iii. if it really is the law, I really am required to obey it; and if the executor of the laws is diligent, and the judge is just, my violation of it will be punished even though it is not a natural law
 - a) if you don't think so, just go out in front of the church building in a few minutes, pull out your guns from wherever you have them concealed, and start shooting; pull out your spare ammo, reload, and shoot some more
 - b) see if the police come! When the officer comes, try explaining to him that the law against shooting in the city limits is not a natural law, but just a positive law, and in your conscience you don't agree that you are bound by that law
 - c) when you stand trial, just explain to the judge and the jury
 - d) when the jailer comes, just explain to him

2. law regarding safety on the public roads

- a. I must not drive so fast as to lose control of the car and crash into another driver
 - i. I know this innately; this idea is in me by nature
 - ii. If ever I am told this, I easily agree that it is right
- b. I must not drive above 20 miles per hour near a school (I am not defending the rightness of having such a law; but it is in fact the law.)
 - i. I do not know this innately
 - ii. If ever I am told this, I don't easily agree that it is right
 - a) is that really supposed to be the speed limit here? it seems this stretch of road would be safe at 40
 - b) if this really is a law, am I sure I'm understanding the intent of it rightly?
 - c) is it still in force, or has it maybe been repealed?
 - d) no one seems to care about enforcing it; I've seen people drive through this school zone at 40 and not get stopped by the police
 - e) my dad said you don't really have to obey the speed limits
 - iii. if it really is the law, I really am required to obey it; and if the executor of the laws is diligent, and the judge is just, my violation of it will be punished even though it is not a natural law
 - a) if you don't think so, just drive down to a 20mph school tomorrow morning and drive through at 40; turn around and drive back through; do this a few times

- b) see if the police come! When the officer pulls you over, try explaining to him that the 20mph school zone speed limit is not a natural law, but just a positive law, and in your conscience you don't agree that you are bound by that law; see whether or not he gives you a ticket
- c) when you arrive for your court date, explain to the judge

B. biblical doctrine of natural law

Romans 2:14-15 for when Gentiles, who do not have the law, **by nature do the things in the law**, these, although not having the law, are a law to themselves, (15) **who show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness**, and between themselves their thoughts accusing or else excusing them)

1. God made us with law in our conscience; He wrote law in our hearts when He created us. How do we know that?

a. people who don't know the Ten Commandments naturally do what the Ten Commandments require (give examples)

b. people who don't know the Ten Commandments make right moral judgments in their conscience

i. if they act wrongly, their thoughts accuse them

ii. if they act rightly, their thoughts excuse them

2. Most of the matter in the Ten Commandments is law of this kind, already in us by nature

a. so that we already know it without being told

b. when we're told, we easily see the rightness of it

3. Do not let the ease of accepting such commandments that are natural-moral confuse you regarding the commandments such as the sabbath commandment, which are partly positive-moral

C. note on sabbath commandment as positive-moral rather than natural-moral

1. see beginning of commandment "remember the sabbath day"

2. it is not necessary to say, "remember not to kill anyone"

D. interesting feature of positive laws like the sabbath law

1. the requirements of positive-moral commandments can be set aside if in conflict with natural-moral commandments

a. example David and the holy bread; which example shows that providing food does not constitute sabbath breaking

b. example firing a gun within the city limits to kill a rabid animal

c. example exceeding the speed limit on the way to the hospital

2. the requirements of positive-moral commandments can be set aside if in conflict with other positive commandments

a. example: a priest would labor at offering sacrifices on the sabbath day; a priest would circumcise a child on the sabbath

E. the fact that positive laws like the sabbath can be set aside temporarily if in conflict with other laws tends to confuse our conscience

1. we think that because it can be set aside in some cases means it is not moral, it is not a matter of right and wrong for all mankind
2. that is wrong thinking!
3. ceremonies of the Old Covenant are like this, so we think the sabbath commandment is like this, too
 - a. yes, the ceremonies are this kind of law---the kind you don't know without being told
 - b. but they are not moral law---the kind that applies to all mankind

So, it is easier for the conscience to see the rightness of commands in the second table of the law than commands in the first table of the law

II. It is easier to see the rightness of commands we know by nature than the rightness of commands we don't know by nature, but have to be told

III. But whether a moral commandment is about love to man or love to God, and whether it is known naturally or not known naturally, a moral commandment from God is still for us to obey

A. A moral commandment regarding love toward God will be harder for your conscience to grasp, but it is still God's commandment for you to obey

B. A moral commandment you do not know naturally will be harder for your conscience to grasp than one you know naturally, but it is still God's commandment for you to obey

CONCLUSION

Therefore, let all who love the Lord, with a heart born again by His Spirit, with gratitude to the One who has Redeemed you

Exodus 20:8-11 "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. (9) Six days you shall labor and do all your work, (10) but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the LORD your God. In it you shall do no work: you, nor your son, nor your daughter, nor your male servant, nor your female servant, nor your cattle, nor your stranger who is within your gates. (11) For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it.

This does not make the positive-moral law less authoritative than the natural-moral law.

I. Actually all of the first four commandments seem strange to the flesh

II. The moral-positive element of the commandment moves the issue from consensus to obedience

III. The moral-positive element of the commandment allows for seeming disobedience not to be sinful

A. explain

B. but this does not mean the commandment is not moral

Hodgins:

aversion to obligation and authority

Poole (on Mt 5:17):

The greatest objection urged against Christ destroying part of the law, and adding new precepts to the moral law, is that about the change of the sabbath; but this is none, if we consider that the moral law required no more than one day of seven to be kept as a day of holy rest, not this or that particular day; for the particular day, the Jews learned it from the ceremonial law, as Christians learn theirs from Christ's and the apostles' practice. Nor is it any objection against this, that the seventh day from the creation is mentioned in the law, to those who know how to distinguish between the precept and the argument; the seventh from the creation is not in the precept, but in the argument, For in six days, & c. Now there is nothing more ordinary than to have arguments of a particular temporary concernment used to enforce precepts of an eternal obligation, where the precepts were first given to that particular people, as to whom those arguments were of force, an instance of which is in the first commandment, as well as in this: as, on the other side, arguments of universal force are oft annexed to precepts, which had but a particular obligation upon a particular people for a time. Thus in the ceremonial law, we often find it is an argument to enforce many ceremonial precepts, For I am the Lord thy God.