

—Westminster Shorter Catechism—
Lesson 80—The Tenth Commandment, Qs. 79-81

Introduction

- I. This commandment is uniquely concerned with a man's heart and state of mind.
 - A. Unlike the other commandments of the Second Table, which speak to our words and actions, this one speaks to the *heart*: to how a man feels and to what he desires. The others speak of the streams as they flow into the life, but this one speaks of the fountain from whence all those waters flow. By the tenth commandment the Lord regulates the disposition, motions, affections, and desires of the heart which spring into outward expression. The tenth commandment is a call to keep the heart, Pr 4.23.
- II. *Don't all the commandments reach the heart already?* In other words, *is there anything new in this commandment that's not at least inferred and implied in the others?* Because the Law of God is spiritual, every commandment reaches the heart and forbids not only the outward act of sin but the inward desire of it as well. So why does the Lord add the tenth commandment?
 - A. To show us that states of mind, which are expressed in conduct, have a moral character and are either sinful or righteous.
 - B. To make *explicit* what is *implicit* in the others, that none might pretend ignorance. As the last commandment, it indicates that they all require inward as well as outward obedience. The tenth commandment teaches us the spiritual nature of all the rest, Rom 7.14.
 - C. To convict and humble us by alerting us to the continual scum of evil desires that perpetually arise in our hearts in the face of God's law.
 1. In spite of all the learning he'd received, Paul tells us in Rom 7 that unless the tenth commandment addressed the state of his heart, he never would've seen it or the sinfulness of it. He was blind to what was implicit in the other commandments and was graciously saved by the explicit statement of the tenth commandment. Paul never saw himself as a sinner or even knew what sin really was until the tenth commandment came home to his heart by the Spirit, Rom 7.7-9. This is a notable reminder of both the depraved blindness of man's mind and the hypocrisy and deceitfulness of man's heart. Until the Lord opens our eyes, we won't and can't see, Mt 13.16; 16.15-17.
 2. This is the godly man's greatest grief and cause for humility: that his heart is so wretchedly and perpetually sinful. This makes him cry out, Wretched man that I am! This makes him long for his full deliverance from the body of death. This makes him thankful to God for His grace and mercy in Christ.

The sins forbidden, WLC 148

- I. This commandment forbids *discontentment* with our divinely appointed position, work, and estate. Discontentment is a grievous sin. Boston, "it's the color of hell all over, a compound of the blackest ingredients, the scum of the corrupt heart boiling up." Discontentment is:
 - A. A refusal to be subject to and a rebellion against the will of God in your life, Hos 4.16. What pleases God doesn't please the malcontent. Whatever God wills, the malcontent wills the contrary. Because it's not so much a corresponding desire for the opposite of God's will as it is a desire to have the reins of government in its own hands.
 - B. Grieving and murmuring under God's providence in your life, 1Kgs 21.4. The malcontent complains, not simply because he's not getting this or that but because he's not getting his own way.
 - C. Anger and wrath against God for your condition, Jude 16. Malcontents can't keep quiet, but will vent their anger in complaints against God.
 - D. Accusing God of foolishness, injustice, and cruelty, Jude 15; Mal 3.13-15. Boston, "there are ounces and pounds of rebellion against God in discontentment and not one grain of religion or reason. If one should take it for a description of hell, he wouldn't be far off. For the truth is, discontent is a hell in the bosom, and a lively emblem of the pit of darkness."

- II. The evil of discontentment is further seen in that it arises from:
 - A. A blind judgment which can't see into the infinite wisdom of God's providence, which does all things well, Dt 32.4.
 - B. A proud heart that's never satisfied with what it has but always wants more than God's seen fit to give, 1Kgs 21.1-4.
 - C. An unmortified love for the world, 1Tim 6.9-10.
 - D. A spirit of unbelief that God won't provide what we need and that what God provides is not enough, Mt 6.30.
- III. Question: Does this commandment forbid all desires for more? No.
 - A. We may desire more than we have, provided our desire is combined with a desire for greater usefulness and service to God and with a willingness to go without if the Lord sees that to be better. Therefore, we can work for more and pray for more, but always subject to an ultimate desire that God gives us no more than He knows would be good for us, Pr 30.7-9; 3.5-10; Mt 6.25-33.
- IV. This commandment forbids *coveting* anything that is our neighbor's, Dt 19.14; 23.24; Pr 3.29.

The duties required, WLC 147

- I. Contentment with God's providence.
 - A. Whyte, a contented mind is a *contained* mind that doesn't overflow, push itself out of, and wander beyond the conditions and limits within which it's providentially placed. A contented mind has all it wants; or if it has any wants it surrenders them to God in prayer without rebellion or complaint, because it wants nothing that it's not permitted to possess.
 - B. Contentment is a grace of God. The moralist can drum up indifference, asceticism, stoicism, and other states of mind that seem unmoved by circumstances, but none of these is true contentment. Contentment is a grace of God that rests on religious truths embraced by faith. Basically, contentment arises from seeing that our lives are in God's hands, who lovingly, wisely, faithfully, cares for us and withholds from us no good thing, Ps 84.11.
- II. Contentment with God's law, Ps 19.7-11; 119.1-16.
- III. Contentment with God's providence to our neighbors.

Applications

- I. This commandment teaches us to watch our heart and crush our sin when it's at its weakest, in the form of a desire, before it breaks out into open transgression and, worse, into a habit. It's not enough to cleanse the hands of open sin, but we must mortify sin in the heart and strive for heart-purity, Ps 24.3-4.
- II. The breaches of the second table begin in the heart. If we were more diligent to keep the heart and put a hedge around the heart, we'd commit fewer outward sins than we do, Pr 4.23; Js 1.14-15; Josh 7.20-21.
- III. If we find our satisfaction in God's salvation we won't covet other things, Ps 4.6-7.
- IV. Believe that there's nothing in the world that either your happiness or misery is bound up with. True happiness is only in God and true misery is only in hell. Believe that and you can be content in any condition, Phil 4.11-13.
- V. Believe that God will take care of your needs and trust Him to do so, Phil 4.19; Mt 6.33.
- VI. Learn to live by faith. Faith feeds on the promises of God in every condition. Faith gives a favorable view of all afflictions. Faith draws on things unseen for present living. Faith lightens all our crosses. And faith finds all it wants in God, Ps 73.25-26.