



LESSON 15

The Ten Commandments, Part 10

“I would think it a greater happiness to gain one soul to Christ than mountains of silver and gold to myself.”

MATTHEW HENRY

Kirk’s Comment

This is the final Commandment in our study. After completing this lesson, you might want to review all ten to make sure you understand the spiritual nature of each. Remember, these Commandments are the mirror that will show people their sin in its true light. Study them until you have them memorized. They will prove to be invaluable weapons as you speak with the lost.

QUESTIONS & OBJECTIONS

“I have broken the Ten Commandments, but I do good things for people.”

Many people do similar things. They may steal from their employer or cheat on their taxes, then give to a charity or spend Thanksgiving helping at a soup kitchen. They think they are balancing the scales: they have done bad, and now they are doing good. However, the Bible reveals that the motive of guilty sinners is one of guilt (see Hebrews 9:14). They are attempting to bribe the Judge of the Universe. The Judge in this case will not be corrupted. He must punish all sinners. Good works cannot earn mercy; it comes purely by the grace of God. He will dismiss our iniquity only on the grounds of our faith in Jesus.



In this lesson we will look at the Tenth Commandment: “**You shall not covet** . . . anything that is your neighbor’s” (Exodus 20:17).

Covetousness is perhaps the most subtle of sins. It seems minor compared to adultery, theft, or rape. However, before a man steals, he covets. Before he rapes or commits adultery, he covets. Covetousness is the spark that sets off the fuse of sin. It is a sin that lies close to the surface of every human being. Few children are content with ten pieces of candy when the child next to him gets eleven. Covetousness is the bedfellow of jealousy, greed, and lust. It was this quiet sin that found a place in the heart of King David, rich and blessed though he was. His covetous eye roamed toward another man’s wife, and opened the door to a multitude of sins.

Who of us can stand guiltless and say that we have never jealously desired something that belongs to someone else? Whether we long for another’s house, car, income, or lifestyle, our covetousness reveals a lack of gratitude for what God has already given us. That’s why Scripture admonishes us to “be without covetousness; and be content with such things as you have” (Hebrews 13:5). Learn to pray along with the psalmist, “Incline my heart unto your testimonies, and not to covetousness. Turn away my eyes from beholding vanity . . .” (Psalm 119:36,37).

Matthew Henry said, “The Tenth Commandment strikes at the root; Thou shalt not covet. The others forbid all desire of doing what will be an injury to our neighbour; this forbids all wrong desire of having what will gratify ourselves.”

Look at this incredible quote from Martin Luther. It reminds us of the function and power of the Law to reveal our “hidden” sins:

As long as a person is not a murderer, adulterer, thief, he would swear that he is righteous. How is God going to humble such a person except by the Law? The Law is the hammer of death, the thunder of hell and the thunder of God’s wrath to bring down the proud and shameless hypocrites. When the Law was instituted on Mount Sinai it was accompanied by lightning, by storms, by the sounds of trumpets, to tear to pieces that monster called self-righteousness. As long as a person thinks he is right he is going to be incomprehensibly proud and presumptuous. He is going to hate God, despise His grace and mercy, and ignore the promises in Christ. The gospel of free for-



givenness of sins though Christ will never appeal to the self-righteous. This monster of self-righteousness, this stiff-necked beast, needs an axe. And that is what the Law is, a big axe. Accordingly the proper use and function of the Law is to threaten until the conscience is scared stiff.

It's important to warn those who are guilty of this "harmless" sin that according to Scripture, "No covetous man, who is an idolater, has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God" (Ephesians 5:3,5). In coveting, a person transgresses not only the Tenth, but also the First and Second Commandments. When he loves material things more than he loves God, he is setting his affections on the gift, rather than on the Giver. What father wouldn't be grieved if his beloved child loved his toys more than the father who gave him the toys? A child should love his father first and foremost. He should love the giver more than the gift, and be content with what he has.

QUESTIONS

- 1. What does it mean to covet?**
- 2. Why is the quiet sin of covetousness so harmful?**
- 3. What is the opposite of covetousness? (See Hebrews 13:5.)**



Christian: “Did you know that that Bible is packed with scientific and medical facts that were written thousands of years before man discovered them?”

Phil Osiffer: “No, I didn’t.”

Christian: “The fact that they are in the Bible proves that it is supernatural in origin. Not only that, but the Bible is also filled with prophecies that are 100% accurate.”

Phil Osiffer: “What about Nostradamus and his prophecies?”

Christian: “Nostradamus read the Bible in secret, stole its prophecies, and made them his own. Anyone who is ignorant of Bible prophecy will be impressed with the ‘prophecies’ of Nostradamus.”

Phil Osiffer: “My life’s philosophy is that we should do to others as we would have them do to us.”

Christian: “Those are the words of Jesus. Have you done that?”

Phil Osiffer: “What?”

Christian: “Treated others as you would like to be treated?”

Phil Osiffer: “Pretty much.”

Christian: “Have you ever lied to someone?”

Phil Osiffer: “Yes.”

Christian: “Have you ever stolen anything from someone?”

Phil Osiffer: “Yes.”

Christian: “You have lied to and stolen from others, and therefore haven’t treated others as you would like them to treat you. You haven’t lived up to your life’s philosophy. Do you know what that’s called?”

Phil Osiffer: “What?”

Christian: “Hypocrisy. If God judges you by the Ten Commandments on the Day of Judgment—bearing in mind that you are a lying thief who is guilty of hypocrisy, and no hypocrite will enter heaven—do you think you will be innocent or guilty?”



FEATHERS FOR ARROWS

Years ago, Southern California police carried out an interesting sting operation. They had a list of thousands of wanted criminals who had somehow evaded jail. Instead of risking their lives by attempting to arrest each one, they sent all the criminals a letter telling them they had won a large amount of money in a drawing.

The police put signs and banners on a building, and placed balloons and even a clown on the outside to create a festive atmosphere in order to welcome the “winners.” As each criminal entered the building, he heard music and other sounds of celebration. He was then ushered into a room where he smiled as his hand was shaken. The facial expression changed from joy to disbelief as each was told, “Congratulations, you have just won time in prison!” Dozens of criminals made their way through the main doors, were arrested and ushered out the back door.

It was interesting to note that many of the lawbreakers admitted as they were apprehended, “I *thought* it was a sting operation!” but they couldn’t stay away because of their greed. Their love of money blinded them to reason. Don’t be like them. Think deeply about the issue of eternity, asking yourself, “What shall it profit a man if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul?”

WORDS OF COMFORT

Some years ago I felt sorry for one of our neighbors. The poor man spent a great deal of time and money pouring concrete, hour after hour, night after night, week after week, for a long driveway in front of his new home. The finished product looked superb—until it rained. Puddles formed every two or three yards.

So he took a sledgehammer and spent hour after hour, night after night, week after week, smashing it into small pieces, which he loaded onto his trailer and made *many* trips to the dump. Then he splashed out, bought some more cement, and spent hour after hour, night after night, week after week laboriously pouring concrete. For many days we heard



the sound of a concrete mixer, mixing concrete as our neighbor tried to rectify his mistake.

Finally, the job was completed. This driveway looked even better than the first. One could even say that it looked as if a professional had done it...until it rained and revealed puddles slightly shallower than the first effort.

He moved.

Memory Verse

“Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.”

1 JOHN 2:15

Last Words

Anne Boleyn (1507–1536), second wife of Henry VIII:

“O God, have pity on my soul. O God, have pity on my soul.”