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## **OUR OBLIGATIONS TOWARD OTHERS**

***- EXODUS 20:12-17. - JULY 21. -***

**Golden Text: – "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself."  
– Lev. 19:18.**

WE CONTINUE our examination of the Decalogue, whose first three commands, we have seen, referred to Israel's obligations to God. The remaining seven pertain to their relationship to each other and to all men. The fourth only is a kind of connecting link, being applicable to both God and man. Here again we do well to remember that not to Spiritual Israel but to Natural Israel these commands were given. It would be impossible for us to think of God as giving to his Spirit-begotten children the commands not to kill, not to steal, etc., for we know that the spirit of murder and the spirit of theft could not be in any one possessing the Spirit of God, the holy Spirit, the spirit of love.

Whoever, then, has been begotten of the holy Spirit, and is a Spiritual Israelite indeed, cannot apply the Father's voice in these commandments to himself; but he can through these commands given to the natural man gain more and more clear conceptions of right and wrong on any subject relating to his fellow-creatures. Begotten of the spirit of love toward all, he can in the study of these commandments learn by antithesis how to exercise his loving disposition toward others more and more effectively. By the Lord's grace let us seek to appropriate profitable instructions from these commands, that we may be more fully conformed to the perfect standard in our hearts, and so far as possible in our outward conduct toward all. [R4019 : page 200]

## **THE FIFTH COMMANDMENT**

In this commandment to honor father and mother we have the very foundation of society, because whoever learns to respect his forbears will proportionately have consideration for others; while those disobedient to parents and without natural affection are prepared to be covenant-breakers and anarchists when conditions shall favor such procedures. Growth of disrespect to parents is one of the notable features of our day, and one that the Apostle called attention to as marking the day of trouble in the end of this age. (Rom. 1:29-31.) He associates it with headiness and highmindedness, and we are not to forget that these condemned qualities are being inculcated and fostered by all the higher teachings of the worldly wise.

If our forefathers but a little while back were monkeys – as all the colleges and seminaries of the world are instructing the youth – why should we have much honor or respect for them? And why should not each member of the rising generation feel heady and highminded, self-conceited, puffed up with the thought that he is further from the monkey than his parents and nearer to the ideal set before him by his instructors? The great increase of knowledge along all lines in our day seems to corroborate this teaching of the worldly wise, and only those who have the instruction of the Word of God can realize that present progress is due to another cause than evolution – that it is the result of the development of the divine plan, in preparation for the glorious Millennial day already dawning. Let not those who have been blessed with a knowledge of Present Truth therein pride themselves either, but rather let them remember the Apostle's words, that we should humble ourselves, and recognize that all of these blessings are from the mighty hand of God and not of ourselves, and that we have nothing except what we have received from him.

What about Spiritual Israelites in respect to this command? Have we not a father and a mother as New Creatures? Yea, verily! The Apostle tells us that the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ hath begotten us as New Creatures. Our Lord confirms this thought, saying, "I ascend to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God." "After this manner pray ye, Our Father which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name." The spirit of loyalty to the heavenly Father, of obedience to him, should be continually with us and prevent any spirit of selfishness or self-seeking or boastfulness. The proper spirit of reverence for the Father is expressed by our Redeemer in the words, "I delight to do thy will, O my God. Thy law is written in my heart." The Spirit of God is the law of love, and with that in our hearts and abounding more and more we will delight to honor the One from whom has come to us every good and perfect gift.

But who is the mother of the New Creature? The Apostle tells us: He points out that as the Jew corresponds to Ishmael, the son of Hagar, so the Spiritual Israelite corresponds to Isaac, the son of Sarah, and that Sarah represents God's original covenant with Abraham; and that in this sense of the word the heavenly Jerusalem, the heavenly promises of the heavenly Kingdom, is the mother of us all. We are begotten and nourished of a good hope, a living faith. We must respect this faith, this promise, this hope, through which we are begotten, as well as respect the heavenly Father, by whose gracious provision we are begotten. If we thus honor the Father, the God of all grace, and thus honor his covenant and the faith which has been begotten in us, it will make us loyal in thought and, so far as possible, also in word and deed. And as there was a special promise of long life to the obedient Jew, so there is a blessing of a promise of eternal life, even of immortality, to the faithful Spiritual Israelite.

## **"THOU SHALT DO NO MURDER"**

This commandment to the Jewish people did not signify that they might not kill animals for food or for sacrifice to the Lord, nor that they should not kill beasts destructive to man's interests. Nor did it mean that they should not put to death those who had been judicially sentenced to death as injurious to the interests of their fellows – for all these things the Israelites did under and in harmony with that Law. To them this commandment meant that no individual had a right to take human life, that only a legal process of the divine sanction could do this.

The lesson from this command to the New Creature is a much broader and deeper one than the Jew or any other natural man, not begotten of the holy Spirit, would be able to appreciate. To the New Creature the higher statement of the Law, "Thou shalt love," has a much more deep and searching signification than could be understood to be attached to this command, "Do not murder." While the New Creature would not think of committing murder, taking the life of another, he needs to be still more deeply instructed – namely, that any wicked thought or sentiment in his heart against his brother, any malice or hatred or anger, is of the murder-spirit, which is contrary to his new standard and must be thoroughly eradicated. The Lord enunciated this when he said, "He that hateth his brother is a murderer" – he has the spirit or disposition which, under aggravation or excitement or removal of restraint, would imply that he would do injury to his brother; and the desire to injure at all, to wound, to maim, is the desire to that limited extent to murder him, to take away his blessings, to destroy his interests.

## **THE LETTER AND THE SPIRIT**

The spirit of this commandment, its scope, would lead the followers of Christ to be careful of the lives and limbs of their employes or whoever might be under their charge or care. True,

in our day we have laws made for such protection of laborers, mechanics, children, etc., and we are glad that it is so. We are not, however, to conclude that this signifies always a larger amount of the Spirit of the Lord, the spirit of justice, on the part of employers. Rather, as a rule, we may feel sure that they are a result of a growth of knowledge on the part of the masses, and that few laws of this kind are enacted that have not first been demanded. But Christians, those begotten of the Spirit of the Lord, should be forehanded in all such matters – not waiting for compulsion of law, but rather thoughtful of the needs of others, seeking their good, recognizing their responsibilities, and seeking to live up to them. Ah, yes! those who belong to the Body of Christ and are taught of God and actuated by **[R4020 : page 201]** his holy Spirit not only ought to be but are peculiar people, zealous of good works, zealous for righteousness, justice and loving interest in their fellow-creatures.

What we thus see to be true in our relationship to others in the world is, if possible, intensified in the Church – between the various members of the Body of Christ. If we would properly be careful for the welfare of the world, how much more interest we should feel in all whom we recognize as brethren in God's family, traveling with us against the course of the world and the flesh and the Adversary, endeavoring with us to stem the tide of imperfection in ourselves and in all with whom we have contact, and live according to the divine ideals? What sympathy, what love for the brethren we must feel, how careful we must be not to kill them. As the Apostle says, Should I permit my meat to destroy one for whom Christ died? Should I exercise my liberties to that extent, and be careless of the welfare of a brother? How could I, if actuated by the Father's Spirit, the Spirit of Christ, the spirit of love? Hence, as the Apostle points out, no one should be recognized as a leader in the Church of Christ, whatever his qualifications, if he be a striker, a wounder of the brethren.

Let us learn to appreciate the Spirit of the Lord as we find it amongst his brethren, and let us each be more and more zealous for its cultivation, that so far from doing injury or wounding any of them it would be our joy to minister to them, to serve them, to bind up their wounds, and to assist them in every manner within our power. Indeed there are some who, while very generous, very well-meaning, very self-sacrificing in the Lord's cause, are forgetful of the spirit of love toward the brethren and open to this rebuke of being wounders. On the other hand, of course, all who are the Lord's should seek not to be easily wounded or easily hurt, but, on the contrary, to be strong in the Lord, and so covered with the armor of the Lord that harsh words or harsh deeds, either from the brethren or from the world or from the Adversary, would take no effect because of the covering of grace and truth in the armor.

### **"THOU SHALT NOT COMMIT ADULTERY"**

This seventh commandment was designed to be the protection of the home and the family, and we may be sure that to the Jew it included fornication and uncleanness in general. Obedience to this command is recognized the world over, even amongst those who have little or no knowledge of God, as being essential to the welfare and happiness of the individual, the home and the community – as affecting not only the moral interests and health, but also the physical. Whoever disregards this law brings upon himself most assuredly injurious consequences as respects the present life, and a degradation of mind and character which will have more or less influence upon his future welfare.

What lesson can the New Creature in Christ learn from this commandment to the old creature? It emphasizes to him the value and importance of the new mind, the new nature, which in him has already devoted to death the natural man with his affections and desires. It emphasizes to him the declarations of the Lord's Word that, "If ye live after the flesh ye shall die: but if ye through

the Spirit do mortify [kill, destroy] the deeds of the body, ye shall live" (Rom. 8:13) – ye shall correspondingly become strong as New Creatures and be acceptable of the Lord to the eternal life promised to them that love him.

The New Creatures are pure in heart, and to them everything akin to adultery, adulteration of any kind, must be recognized as contrary to the new nature – its foes. It recognizes the truth of the Apostle's words, that the flesh and the new mind are contrary the one to the other, and are at warfare, and that the victory of the new nature means the putting to death of all such fleshly desires as would lead in the direction of adultery. The general law of love which the Lord has given to the New Creation is in harmony with the spirit of this command. He who loves his neighbor as himself would not wish to destroy that neighbor's home and its sacredness, even as he would not wish his neighbor to destroy his home and its sacredness. Do unto others as you would that they should do to you – the Golden Rule of the New Creature in Christ – would effectively bar him from any disposition or desire in the direction of this prohibition. He would not need this command, because the law of love under which he is placed in the school of Christ is still more searching, still more effective.

Our Lord exemplified this higher teaching when he said, "He that looketh upon a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery already with her in his heart." (Matt. 5:28.) In other words, the spirit of God's law is that to desire to do wrong and to be merely hindered by circumstances and conditions, is in God's sight as serious, as criminal, as to have really done that wrong.

### **"THOU SHALT NOT STEAL"**

A proper recognition of the rights of others, the property of others, is here inculcated. There are no limitations here such as a natural man, worldly wise, would be inclined to recognize. It does not say, Do not steal if there is the slightest risk of your being



caught, exposed, punished. It does not say, Do not steal a small amount, because it would not be worth while, and the risk of being caught would be too great – steal only, if you can do so, in a semi-legal manner, which could not easily be detected or which, if detected, would be shielded by some appearance of legality. It plainly and simply meant that each Jew should recognize the rights of every other Jew, his property, his interests, and not misappropriate them. This command, it will be seen, covers every form of theft, both public and private, for the most serious of all thefts we may see are the public ones, by which under pretense of legality and with the form thereof public properties are appropriated, or, in the language of the law, "seized" without giving a reasonable equivalent.

This command relates to justice in general, for the parent may steal from his child by failing to recognize the rights of the child, and his own obligations as a parent. For instance, it is a just obligation that attaches to parentage to give, if possible, the offspring a reasonable equipment of common education at least, as a preparation for the duties of life; and the parent who without necessity deprives his children of this is stealing from them, depriving them of those things which belong to them of right, of common decency, of justice. Children also should recognize an obligation toward their parents and toward each other; mine **[R4020 : page 202]** and thine should be recognized in every home as the first basis of order, the foundation of all estimation of justice. We know of nothing so productive of wranglings and disputings in families as the ignoring of one another's rights – taking advantage of one another – in other words, stealing from each other, perhaps only trifles. The ignoring of conscience and justice in trifling matters leads to a general searing of conscience, and ultimately to a disregard of the rights of others and a selfish appropriation to one's own use of any and everything possible where the risk and the penalty are not too great.



As for the New Creature: his law of love, the very essence of his mind and heart, is opposed to stealing; love rather prompts to giving, to doing: the New Creature delights to do good and to communicate, to give, in all good things. Not only does he delight to give the Truth to others, but in proportion as the Spirit of the Lord fills and permeates his heart and his life, he would have pleasure in the giving of earthly good things to all in need. Generosity is an element of the new heart, the new mind, the new disposition, begotten of the spirit of love. Nevertheless, trained in the irregularities which generally prevail, practised in the little injustices of home and business, it may take the New Creature some time to discover that these are out of accord with love. He will, however, in proportion as the holy Spirit abounds in his heart, consider his words, his deeds, yea, his thoughts, to see that justice, the very foundation of God's throne, is the foundation of all of his conduct in life toward others – that he never gives less than justice to anyone.

Next he will consider how love will even do more than justice would demand on suitable occasions, where it would not be injurious; and so far as the treatment of himself by others is concerned he should be so full of sympathy for the world in general in its fallen condition that he would neither demand nor expect full justice to be done to him. His knowledge of the fallen condition of the race would enable him to sympathize with those with whom he had to do. He might find it even necessary to spur himself on this score lest his love and generosity should do injury, especially in his own family, where he holds a responsibility. Some of the Lord's people as heads of families need to learn to kindly, gently, yet firmly, insist upon justice between the various members of their families, even though they may not insist on having justice done to themselves in every particular. **[R4021 : page 202]**

"Who steals my purse steals trash;

But he who filches from me my good name  
Robs me of that which not enriches him,  
Yet leaves me poor indeed."

The New Creature, searching deeply for the spirit of love in all the affairs of life, soon learns that one of the commonest forms of theft is referred to in the above lines of Shakespeare. Common theft may indeed be guarded against, but the person who either of malice or of recklessness steals his neighbor's good name by starting slander is far more to be dreaded, and despised as well. We can see a reason why selfishness would permit the appropriation of another's temporal goods, even though we cannot justify such a course; but who could excuse or justify, either in himself or in another, the theft of a good name? This violation of the eighth commandment is, alas, so general that almost none is exempt from it.

Sometimes the character of another is traduced for the purpose of implying a higher sense of honor or truth or righteousness on the part of the traducer; but he who rightly judges of the matter will draw an opposite inference, and feel a righteous indignation that the one who thus robs another of his name should expect the latter to sympathize with the act and to be a receiver of the stolen goods. By far the greater number, however, traduce their fellows thoughtlessly, because they have never trained themselves to a proper standard – the Golden Rule. Their tongues are loose, they lack secretiveness, and above all they lack love. How would love affect such a matter? We reply that love affects every matter of life, great or small. The number of people who would traduce themselves is fortunately exceedingly small, and if they loved their neighbors as themselves they would be equally careful in respect to the honor of the neighbor's name, equally careful not to cast a reproach by statement or insinuation or glance or shrug of the shoulders.

The New Creatures in Christ must have this spirit of love, Spirit of Christ, spirit of the truth. Alas, that it requires some of them so long to learn how to properly extend this love in all the affairs of life, toward the brethren, toward their own kin, toward the world and toward their enemies. "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ he is none of his," should ever ring in our ears, and we should remember that we are in the school of Christ to learn of him, to become copies of God's dear Son; and that in no other particulars could we so discredit him and his Word than by evil speaking, slandering and slander-mongering. Let us awake to righteousness and sin not, for many seem not to have a knowledge of this truth. After preaching a discourse on this very topic, the writer shook hands with a member of the congregation passing out, who declared a great appreciation of the discourse and a realization of its importance, yet while still shaking hands and evidently quite unconscious of the fact, unkind reflections were made against a fellow-member of the Body of Christ.

### **THE NINTH COMMANDMENT**

"Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor." This would not only apply to a case in court – perjury – but it would be equally applicable in all the little affairs of life. Having this in mind none would dare tell an untruth against his neighbor, against his goods, his business, his anything, however much the untruth might assist in the making of a bargain. Justice stands in defense of the neighbor, and whoever violates justice, violates the holy law of God. The New Creature, possessed by the Spirit of the Lord, would certainly not wish to bear false witness against his neighbor, yet with many the flesh is weak, and the temptation is strong to favor personal interest in violation of the truth – righteousness. The New Creature might be overtaken by such a fault, but could never assent to it, never agree to it. So surely as he is a New Creature and has the new mind of Christ, the spirit of love, he would be obliged to hate and abominate such a weakness

and to make good any injustice [R4021 : page 203] done, to fortify his mind against a repetition of the offense. On the contrary, the disposition of the New Creature must be that of love to his neighbor, which would prefer to tell no evil about him, however true it might be – which would prefer to shield him, to guard his interests, and to lovingly think no evil or as little evil as possible respecting any conduct of his that might seem to us irregular. Love suffereth long and is kind; it imagines no evil, but rather imagines good.

### **THE TENTH COMMANDMENT**

Covetousness is not the desire for more blessings for ourselves, but an enviousness of the possessions of others, and a desire to appropriate them for ourselves. It is akin to envy but worse, because it goes further. Someone has said, "Envy makes a weakling; covetousness a fiend." Standing as it does as the last of a series of commandments, this one, as it were, casts a reflection upon all which precede it – it is the climax of all the commandments respecting our relationship to our fellowman; it takes hold of the thoughts, whereas the others take hold upon the words and deeds. Of it Canon Farrar has said: –

"This is a unique commandment. Search all the laws of the world and you will not find one which resembles it. The sixth, seventh, eighth and ninth commandments you will find in all codes, though only as prohibitions of crimes amenable to judicial punishment. The tenth commandment is the complement of all the rest. It shows that God requires of us not only outward virtue but inward holiness; that he demands in us the sacrifice of the will, from which wicked actions spring; that sinful imaginings are a crime against him, as well as wicked acts."

The New Creature, guided by the new mind, with the spirit of love toward his neighbor, cannot covet anything belonging to another. He might desire to have good things of his own, but he

would rather give to his neighbor than take from him. It is even permitted of the New Creature to covet – the things which he desires – "Covet earnestly the best gifts." (1 Cor. 12:31.) The organ or mental quality which leads worldly minds to covet the things of others is differently directed in the New Creation, and guides them to seek for things on the higher plane, the spiritual, the things which God hath in reservation for them that love him. And these, as the Apostle remarks, must be sought lawfully – in harmony with the law of love which God has given us. Whoever seeks for glory, honor and immortality, the great price of our high calling, seeks a good thing and may rejoice respecting it and in the desire to attain it; but he must ever keep in mind that it can be attained only at the cost of the sacrifice of earthly interests – going to the Master without the camp, bearing his reproach. Let us to whom the Lord has given the royal law of love remember well that it is much more searching, much more strict, than the law of the ten commandments given to the Jew, because ours relates to us according to the mind, the heart, as New Creatures, and not merely to the flesh and its appetites and desires.

**"YOUR FATHER KNOWETH WHAT THINGS YE  
HAVE NEED OF"**

**MATTHEW 6:8**

Our Father knows what things we need,  
Each step along the way;  
His eye of love doth never sleep –  
He watches night and day.

He knows sometimes, like ripening grain,  
We need the sunshine bright;  
Again, he sends the peace that comes  
With shadows of the night.

Sometimes our pride would fain unfurl

Ambition's flaunting sail, –  
Ah! then he knows we need to walk  
Humiliation's vale.

Sometimes he takes our eager hands  
And folds them on our breast,  
He gently lays our work aside –  
He knows we need to rest.

Sometimes we need companionship,  
Sometimes "the wilderness";  
How sweet to feel he'll know and give  
The state that most will bless.

Then let us leave it all with him,  
Assured that, come what may,  
Our Father knows *just what we need*,  
Upon our pilgrim way.

– **G. W. S.**

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