

GOD'S TEN COMMANDS

– *SEPTEMBER 7. – EXODUS 20:1-11. –*

"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind."

– **Luke 10:27.**

GOD'S COVENANT with Israel at Mt. Sinai was that if they should keep perfectly the Decalogue – the Ten Commandments – they would thereby demonstrate that they were perfect men, worthy of everlasting life. Then it would be possible for them to attain the chief blessing under the Abrahamic Covenant – to become the Spiritual Seed of Abraham, through whom God had promised that He would bless the world.

St. Paul represents to us the spirit of the worthiest of the Jews, who were anxious to do God's will and to obtain the blessing, as crying out in anguish of soul, "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from this dead body!" Their minds were certainly alive to the promises and prospects, but their flesh was imperfect, depraved through the fall – like that of all other people. "Ye cannot do the things that ye would." – Gal. 5:17.

Bible students look in amazement at the simplicity of the Decalogue, and at first wonder which of its features the Jews and others were unable to perform fully, satisfactorily. The whole matter seems very simple indeed, just as it did to the Jews, until we perceive that the wonderful Law of God, represented by the Ten Commandments, has a depth of meaning not seen on the surface.

The lengths and breadths and heights and depths of the meaning of this Law were apparently seen by none until Jesus "magnified the Law and made it honorable." He says that hatred toward a brother is incipient murder, and that adulterous desire in the heart is a violation

of the seventh commandment. This throws a new light on the whole matter, and explains to us why none of the Jews or Gentiles have ever been able to keep this Law, except Jesus, since the fall of Adam.

The Great Teacher also explains that the first table of the Law, appertaining to man's duties toward his Creator, means more than merely avoiding image worship and profane swearing. It means that the True God shall be recognized and have first place in the human heart. It means "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind." Any division of the heart or strength or mind or soul violates this commandment.

GOD'S ORIGINAL LAW TO MAN

God's Law to man was not originally given at Mt. Sinai. Indeed, the Mt. Sinai statement of the Law was given not to mankind in general, but merely to the Jewish nation – as a statement of the terms upon which they might become God's Royal Priesthood for the blessing of all nations.

God's original Law to man was given in Eden, when man was created. God's Law was written in Adam's heart, in the sense that he was created in the Divine image – with attributes of mind and heart fully in accord with his Creator. He loved righteousness, and would have had a hatred for iniquity, had there been any to hate. But up to that time there was none.

We marvel at the change that has come, under which the children of Adam are not in God's image and do not love righteousness, but on the contrary, love sin. As the Prophet declares, "They go astray from the womb." He tells us where the change came in, saying, "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; in sin did my mother conceive me." – Psalm 51:5.

After the fall of man, the work of degeneracy progressed so rapidly that Adam's first-born son, Cain, became a murderer. Doubtless the chagrin of Mother Eve in the loss of Eden, and in the battling with the thorns and thistles of the earth under the curse, embittered her mind, arousing anger and resentment, which marked her child. From then till now the course has been downward in general, with occasionally a well-born child less seriously marked by sin – less depraved. Still the Scriptures inform us that "there is none righteous, no, not one."

THE HOPE OF THE FUTURE

The experiences of the whole race for six thousand years forbid that we should expect that any could commend himself to God upon the terms of human perfection and of ability and willingness to keep the Divine Law. Jesus alone has kept that Law, and He, because His life was not derived from Adam – because His life was from the Father directly. He became a man by a change of nature. Because thus begotten miraculously He was "holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners."

God refuses to grant everlasting life to any except the perfect, who will keep His law perfectly and gladly. What hope then is there for our race? There is one hope for the world in general, and another different hope for the Church of Christ, instituted at Pentecost. The hope for the world is that God in His own due time will establish the Messianic Kingdom. It will be a righteous Kingdom, its rulers and judges being the Royal Priesthood.

This Messianic Kingdom will begin by deposing the Prince of this world, and binding him for a thousand years. Speedily the iniquities of earth will be set aside, and the rule of the "rod of iron" will begin. Everything opposed to righteousness will be dashed to pieces. Instead of darkness, ignorance, superstition, doubt and fear, will come in the light of the knowledge of the glory of God. Soon it will fill the entire earth. Under its influence everything sinful will

be discouraged by chastenings, and everything righteous will be encouraged by rewards of blessing. The judgments of the Lord will be abroad in the earth, and the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness. – Isa. 26:9.

As a result, soon every knee will be bowing to God and every tongue confessing His praise. But all of the wilfully rebellious, lovers of sin, will be destroyed in the Second Death – "everlasting destruction." Under that administration, the world will reach again the condition of human perfection from which Adam fell. The privilege to thus return to the image of God with His Law rewritten in their hearts, was secured for all by the sacrifice at Calvary. "Jesus Christ, by the grace of God, tasted death for every man." – Hebrews 2:9.

These all, being perfect again as Adam was at first, plus the experiences of good and evil gained during the seven thousand years, when finally approved of God will have everlasting life, nor be in the slightest danger of ever again mistakenly choosing sin as the road to happiness.

THE CHURCH AND THE LAW

The Church of Christ is selected from mankind, who were born in sin. The members are not put under the Law of Sinai in the sense of being required to keep it perfectly in order to get everlasting life. "Ye are not under the Law, but under grace." (Romans 6:14.) Nevertheless, the Law is very precious to the Church; for, looking at the spirit of it, she sees what she ought to be if perfect, sees what she ought to strive for to the best of her ability, **page 235** sees how far short of perfection she is in the flesh, and sees, additionally, how the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ covers her fleshly imperfections. So fully is all this true, that the Apostle declares that the righteousness (true import, or spirit) of the Law is fulfilled in us, who are walking not *after* the flesh, but *after* the spirit. – Romans 8:4.

In other words, those who consecrate their lives to follow Jesus, sacrificing all of their earthly rights in order to do the will of God, are doing more than the Law could require. The Law required no man to lay down his life for another, but merely to love his neighbor as himself. Hence Christ and the Church, walking in the narrow way of sacrifice, are fulfilling the requirements of the spirit of the Law, and more, even though in the flesh of the Church, because of inherited weaknesses, there is no perfection. These having sacrificed the earthly nature are dealt with by the Father as New Creatures, and judged, not according to the flesh, but according to the spirit – according to their heart intentions.

