

GOD'S HOLY LAW



by Rev (Dr) Timothy Tow

Text: Genesis 2:15-17; 3:6-15

In these days of widespread lawlessness, affecting even the Christian Church to our shame and pain, it is not only timely, but urgent, for us to preach on God's holy Law. This Law God has given to mankind through Moses in the Ten Commandments.

Before we go into this subject, let us learn a lesson from the fortunate state of our nation under God, Singapore that we love. Though one of the smallest nations, Singapore is known throughout the world. We have a good many firsts. We have the tallest hotel, and at the Bird Park I was told we have the highest man-made waterfall in the world! We are the biggest port and we have the best airline. We are the richest in Asia next to Japan, but if you do not believe me, just look into your CPF account! How is it that a tiny nation like ours has become the envy of bigger nations, and the praise of those who respect us? The answer to this question is good government, and a corollary to this is a law-abiding people.

When God created man and put him into the Garden of Eden, which was Paradise, or Heaven on Earth, here was the perfection of perfections of good government. But to live happily in Paradise, man must obey his Creator.

A holy God must have a consecrated people, a people absolutely obedient to His holy Law. To deviate in the least from His will or holy Law is disaster. So, the first thing that God did to the first man and woman after bringing them into the world was to tell them the vital importance of obeying His holy Law. This He did by setting up two trees in the Garden, the Tree of Life and the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. "And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die" (Gen. 2:16-17).

Now, we know the tragic sequel to this primeval event, how Eve under temptation and Adam by deliberation ate of the forbidden fruit. By the way, that fruit was not the apple as the world blindly believes and repeats. Yes, even ministers in high government misquote this portion of the Bible.

Now, the Lord God is a just God. He did not say "thou shalt not touch" as Eve reported. All He said was "Thou shalt not eat of it." It is dangerous to add to God's Word or to take away from it. At any rate, both man and woman had eaten of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge

of good and evil, and in so doing they brought death into the world. They broke the holy Law of God. "Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned" (Rom. 5:12).

That man should obey God absolutely as expressed in the Commandment not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil is known in theological language as the Covenant of Works. That is to say, if man would do all that God commands him, then he can live as long as he keeps on obeying Him. Thus Moses promises the Israelites life in the Promised Land if they will refrain from their old Egyptian ways and keep themselves from the heathen practices of the Canaanites and fully follow the Lord. "After the doings of the land of Egypt, wherein ye dwelt, shall ye not do: and after the doings of the land of Canaan, whither I bring you, shall ye not do: neither shall ye walk in their ordinances. Ye shall do my judgments, and keep mine ordinances, to walk therein: I am the LORD your God. Ye shall therefore keep my statutes, and my judgments: which if a man do, he shall live in them: I am the LORD" (Lev. 18:3-5).

“The soul that sinneth, it shall die.”

The Covenant of Works is not only transacted openly between God and man in a verbal statement, but invisibly inscribed upon the human heart. We are given a conscience that tells us inwardly that if we do good, God will bless us, and conversely, if we do bad, God will punish us. “Who will render to every man according to his deeds: to them who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honour and immortality, eternal life: but unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath . . . which shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another” (Rom. 2:6-15).

But man has broken the holy Law of God. Man has sinned, and God’s Word declares, “The soul that sinneth, it shall die” (Ezek. 18:4). “For by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified” (Gal. 2:16). “For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all” (James 2:10).

Man having failed to keep the Covenant of Works, he is expelled from the Garden. He not only has to die, but also to live a life of

toil and sweat, and woman must suffer pain in childbirth. Man has lost his right to live. To redeem him from death, God has to work on man's behalf by sending a Saviour. This is foretold in Genesis 3:15 when God said to the Serpent, "And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel." By the death of the virgin-born Son of God on the cross to pay the penalty of our sins (His heel is bruised), Satan, who has brought us into death, is crushed. This work of Christ in delivering us from sin and death and restoring life everlasting to us is called "the Covenant of Grace". "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them" (Eph. 2:8-10). "For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Rom. 6:23).

God's Covenant of Grace confirms the Ten Commandments

There are many in the world today who are working their way to heaven by deeds of

charity. Some churchgoers think that by offering money they will find compassion from God. This is like the Buddhist concept of earning a place in the Western Paradise by helping the poor; like the Roman Catholic buying indulgences, or doing penance. This will never save you. The way to life is not through works, but through “repentance [from sin] toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ” (Acts 20:21). Are you trusting in your good works and righteousness which the Bible declares to be “filthy rags” (Isa. 64:6)? For we are only condemned by God’s holy Law.

Since we are saved by grace through faith, and not by works, “do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law” (Rom. 3:31). The Covenant of Grace in no way abrogates God’s holy Law, i.e., the Ten Commandments. Rather, it confirms.

The Ten Commandments are the full expression of the moral law of God. The moral law of God emanates from the holy character of God, like the sun’s rays radiating from the sun. They are the foundation of human society, for without this law it would result in crime and anarchy, rebellion and chaos. Inasmuch as God changes not, so His character changes not, and His law changes not. Indeed, all the laws of

nations and governments insofar as they are just are founded on His holy Law.

One moral law that stems from the Sixth Commandment is given through Noah: “Whoso sheddeth man’s blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made he man” (Gen. 9:6). When a man commits murder, our Singapore law decrees that he be put to death. There is no other alternative. This law is inherited from Great Britain, which was a devout Christian nation in times past. This stabilises our society. But today, Britain has veered from her Christian past. Capital punishment is done away with. What is the result? Murders are rampant and on the increase, and that is the same with every other country that has done away with the Sixth Commandment and capital punishment. The holy Law of God, says Calvin, is a sword that restrains evil, and must remain always. When it is done away or bound by man’s wilful foolishness, crime and corruption multiplies. Woe to the nations that take lightly the Law of God.

God’s holy Law springs from His holiness and love

But what is the relationship between the Christian and the holy Law of God? There is a

school of theology known as Dispensationalism that says that since the law is done away with by the coming of Christ, we are no more under law. Therefore, the Ten Commandments are abrogated together with the ceremonial and statutory laws of the Old Testament. When the Ten Commandments are taken lightly, antinomianism results. Chambers defines antinomianism thus: "The belief that Christians are emancipated by the gospel from the obligation to keep the moral Law — a monstrous abuse and perversion of the Pauline doctrine of justification by faith . . ." One moral law, namely the Sabbath law of the Fourth Commandment, is particularly abused. To the Dispensationalist, the Lord's Day is the same as any other day. They are not careful to keep it holy, i.e., to separate it for a Day of holy rest and worship. As a result, we find no peace on weekdays, since we spurn the peace He gives when we keep the Lord's Day.

The Ten Commandments remain a restraint to Christians, to keep us from sin. The Ten Commandments, says Calvin, is also like a whip, especially to our flesh, to urge us, like a tardy animal, forward to its work. We need the Law to keep us straight.

It is also a lamp unto our feet and a light unto our path. Christians walking in its light are kept from stumbling into sin. Christians, having the new life of God in them by the new birth, love this law and meditate on its virtues, ever willing to do His will by His holy precepts. Jesus says, "If ye love me, keep my commandments" (John 14:15). And John says, "For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous" (1 John 5:3). Hence the Ten Commandments are taught to candidates for baptism in the Catechism Class. The Ten Commandments are basic to the Christian faith.

The holy Law of God springs not only from His holiness but also from His love. The Ten Commandments, according to Jesus' exposition, may be briefly summed up in the Great Commandments. The First Tablet relates to our duty towards God, so it is comprehended in "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind" (Matt. 22:37). The Second Tablet that relates to duty to our fellow men is comprehended in "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." Yea, on these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets. God's Law is balanced by God's

love. By way of contrast, ancient Chinese law allowed a father to kill his son. Muslim law punishes a thief by cutting off his hand. Moses' Law, which is given by God and tempered with love, yea even mercy, punishes a sheep stealer, for example, with paying double compensation if the stolen animal is returned, and four-fold if it be not returned.

What law in all the world is there greater than this? So Moses asks the Israelite nation that had received God's holy Law on mankind's behalf, "And what nation is there so great, that hath statutes and judgments so righteous as all this law, which I set before you this day? Only take heed to thyself, and keep thy soul diligently, lest thou forget the things which thine eyes have seen, and lest they depart from thy heart all the days of thy life: but teach them to thy sons, and thy sons' sons" (Deut. 4:8-9). Our response: "O how love I thy law! it is my meditation all the day" (Ps. 119:97). The whole Bible is God's holy Law. Let us not only keep His holy Law, but treasure it forever in our heart by constant reading and meditation.

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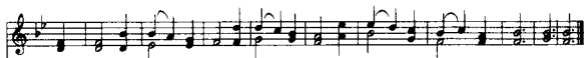
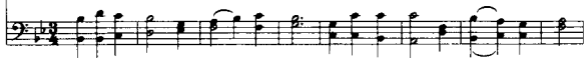
The Ten Commandments

Adapted by T.T.

GERMANY L.M.



1. Th - ou no gods shalt ha - ve but ME, Be - fore no i - dol bow the knee.
2. Nor dare the Sab - bath da - y pro - fane. Give to thy pa - rents ho - nour due.
3. Abstain from words and de - eds un - clean, Steal not for thou of God art seen.



Take not the na - me of God in va - in, Nor dare the Sab - bath da - y pro - fane
Take heed that th - ou no mur - der do, Ab - stain from wor - ds and de - eds un - clean.
Tell not a wil - fil lie, nor love it, What is thy neigh - bour's do not co - vet. A - men.



Jesus says, "Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled" (Matthew 5:17-18).

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