

LAW BREAKING IS IN THE HEART

(Sermon Summary)

Reading: Exodus 20: 1-17.

The Ten Commandments make us explore the nature of our relationship with God. The Sermon on the Mount shows us that we are to think deeply about the law and ourselves. It makes us inquire more closely what God actually requires of us. We are by nature law-breakers. There is an inner rebellion and hostility. We are given over to extreme selfishness and self-centredness. In essence we assert that we are god and will choose our own laws. For the non-Christian, it shows them they will never sufficiently observe the law on God's terms. For the Christian, it points the way forward to imperfect but improving obedience.

The First Commandment is the key to all the Commandments. The Tenth Commandment uncovers the deep-seated reality in our hearts. In effect we have no other god but ourselves. The word 'covet' contains the idea of desiring and reaching towards something. It involves the planning, imagining, and the preoccupation that goes with it. (See James 1:14-15; and James 4:1-2). It leads us to break all the other Commandments.

1. Searching our hearts.

God searches our hearts and we are wise if we do the same. Our neighbour is part of the world around us and the environment in which we do our desiring and willing. The heart or the mind is the arena of the inner man. It is the hidden man, the soul, and includes the unsanctified part of us. With our inner desires, we compare ourselves with others and desire to feel good and look good beside them. We want them to give us honour and status. We want our neighbour to covet what we have. These desires interlock with our pride which justifies our desires and tells us that we deserve to fulfill them. We justify possessing these things and the wrong means we use to get them. We over-ride the Commandments to get what we want and are never satisfied.

There are restraints to these desires that are God-given such as the state, the family, education, the conscience and the church, including Sunday Schools. But by themselves these restraints cannot cure us or give us the power to change lastingly.

In fact Paul reports how the Commandment offered objects to his mind to covet and trapped him (Romans 7:7-12). He coveted status and position and wished to be looked up to.

We have to ask ourselves how well we know our own hearts. We have to ask what might ambush us or have power over us.

2. The Importance of a new nature.

The Holy Spirit living in us brings us a new nature. We are able to have new thoughts and ambitions. We have new ways of reasoning and new motivations. We are able to conform better and better to the law (Galatians 5:16-18). We have power to obey the law. We have access now to grace, truth, life, hope and spiritual encouragement. We see in Romans 8:1-4 the defeat of hopelessness and defeat. Fear has gone and now there is power to obey and conform. We are debtors to God and He generously gives us power to obey (Romans 8:12-14). We are moved to actually love God's law (Romans 7:22). We recoil from and see no good to be gained in disobeying His law. We detest and deplore such disobedience. We want our neighbour to be well treated and honoured. We do not want to be seen to be better than them. Instead of coveting and having our own idols, we want God to be glorified in keeping with the First Commandment. We bridle at false worship, false teaching, hypocritical preachers and status-seekers. We do not want a false representation of the work of the Holy Spirit, a Christ emptied of His power to save, or the Father robbed of His dignity.

3. Let your light shine.

We are to express our new nature in the people that we are and the choices that we make. We are not to be lazy and self-centred. We are not to think about things as if it is 'my life, my leisure.' Instead we are to be God-honouring, seeking His glory. We are to be thankful, not covetous. We are not to hide who we are and whom we serve. We are to show by our works that we serve a great God who is worthy to be worshiped. We are to boldly live out the Ten Commandments.