

Exodus 20:17

Contentment the Essence of the Two Great Commandments

Friday, July 8, 2022 • Read Exodus 20:17

Questions from the Scripture text: What shall we not do to our neighbor's house? Nor what other four specific things of his? Nor what else?

What does God want us to do with/to our neighbor? Exodus 20:17 looks forward to the evening sermon on the coming Lord's Day. In this verse of Holy Scripture, the Holy Spirit teaches us that **God wants us to give our neighbor not only our behavior but love from the heart.**

This commandment, especially, sets the Ten Commandments apart from all of the civil/criminal codes of the history of the world. This commandment shows that this is a spiritual set of laws. Not just in the sense that they are given by the Spirit, though that is true. But in the sense that they govern our spirits. Coveting cannot be criminalized or prosecuted because coveting cannot be seen by law enforcement or judiciaries. But it can be forbidden by God's law and prosecuted by God's judgment, because God sees the heart. Not only does He see the heart; He demands the heart.

The bookends of the Ten Commandments are really the two great commandments that summarize all of the law. The first table is to love the Lord our God with all the heart. And to love Him really is to have Him alone as God and no other, commandment one. The second table is to love our neighbor as ourself. And restrain our hearts from being covetous of our neighbor really is to love him as ourself.

The Spirit grabs our attention, after several short commandments, by naming our "neighbor" in these last two. He could well have left at "You shall not bear false witness" and "You shall not covet." Now, in the tenth commandment, he says "neighbor" three times.

The commandment itself doesn't regulate action so much as attitude, not conduct but a condition of the heart. It names several specific things with which we might be dissatisfied in our own life, or covet from our neighbor's.

But what it is addressing is how we think and feel about those things. God wants our hearts. And He wants us to incline our hearts toward our neighbor as well. When giving the first commandment He said, "I am Yahweh your God, Who brought you... out of the house of slaves" (v2). Now He tells them that they are going to have houses and slaves.

But most of all they are going to have Him Himself. This is why when the apostle says, "Let your conduct be without covetousness; be content with such things as you have" in Heb 13:5, he immediately follows it up with, "For He Himself has said, 'I will never leave you nor forsake you.'" You can be content with what you have, because You have Him, and He is enough. You don't need to have what your neighbor has, because you have God, and He is enough.

Now, we begin to see how dreadful it is to covet something that is our neighbors. It is truly wicked to indulge a state of heart that would make us envious and hostile toward that neighbor. But isn't it even more exceedingly wicked to indulge a state of mind that says that the Lord is not enough? I wonder how many believers, dissatisfied with their marriages, and wishing their spouse was more like another, have realized that they are in fact declaring to God that having Him is not really enough for them.

Truly, as the Lord Jesus taught in Matthew 5, God's law makes demands even of the condition and impulses of our heart. And perhaps, as with Paul in Rom 7:7-12, it is this particular commandment by which we will discover how very much we are breakers of God's law. Praise God, then, that out of love for God and love for us, Christ was willing to humble Himself and add all neediness and lowliness. He has suffered as if He had been covetous, in order to put away our sin, and so that His perfect contentment with God would be counted for us and reproduced in us. Hallelujah!

In what part of life are you most tempted to covetousness? What must you realize that you are really saying to God in those moments?

Sample prayer: Lord, truly You are enough for us. Whom have we in heaven but You, and on earth there is nothing that we desire beside You. But, our hearts often fail and fall into covetousness. Forgive us our sins, and conform us to Yourself, we ask in Your Name, AMEN!

Suggested songs: ARP73C "Yet Constantly I Am with You" or TPH73C "In Sweet Communion, Lord, with Thee"

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(The following is a machine-generated transcription. Please be aware of—and patient with—transcribing errors. If there is something confusing or obviously erroneous, you are invited to listen to the audio recording via hopewellarp.org)

Exodus chapter 20 verse 17. This, these are the words of God. You shall not cover it your neighbor's house. You shall not covet. It, your neighbor's wife nor his mail servant or his female servant and his ox nor his donkey nor anything that is your neighbors.

So far the reading of God's inspired and in air and tort

This commandment really sets the Ten Commandments apart from all of the criminal codes of the time. One of the things that scholars have done in many cases unhelpfully is try to compare the Bible with what appears in criminal codes of the Babylonian, or Hittite or Syrian. At this time it would be the the Hittite and Egyptian Empires were the same time as this was written.

It can be helpful to study those things because like we see in Romans 1 and Romans 2, we know that everyone has a sense of morality because God has put it in us even though or ours is corrupted. But some so-called scholars of the Bible and you definitely need fear quotes on that When they show the similarities.

What they mean is that Moses didn't get this from God? That if there was a Moses, he was copying the world and you might have seen things like that. With respect to flood narratives since every culture in the world has a flood narrative, which could just be. Because there was a flood that covered the whole world.

But one of the things that really sets apart the Ten Commandments, from all of the criminal codes is this commandment because it regulates something that law enforcement does not have access to, at regulates the heart. And the way that the first commandment and the tenth commandment function is not only are the first Great Commandment and second-great, commandment summaries of the tables of the law.

They really appear within the Ten Commandments at the beginning, and at the end You shall love the Lord. Your God, with all your heart. Soul mind and strength and you shall have no other gods before me, which means there's no heart. Soul mind, strength left for any other God.

So you can see how the first great commandment. Not only summarizes the first four but is in essence. The first of the 10. Well the second which is like it. And in God's providence we have in shorter catechism 42, the summary of the 10, the sum of the Ten Commandments You just love the Lord, your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind.

And with all your strength and your neighbor as yourself. Now we heard about our neighbors for the first time in the Ten Commandments in number nine, you shall not bear false. Witness against your neighbor. But the neighbor is mentioned, three times. There's all that repetition and it's talking about heart disposition towards.

What is our neighbors with the implication? That the reason we don't covet it is because we're glad for our neighbor to have it. And coveting, of course, being a matter of the heart. So we hear you shall not covet your neighbors house. You shall not cover your neighbors life, nor his mail servant nor his female servant, nor his dunk ox nor his donkey, nor anything.

That is your neighbors. In other words in the inner thoughts and desires, and motions, and emotions motion, talking about will and emotion, talking about feelings in your heart, you are to count your neighbor. As worthy as you are, that you wouldn't want something to be taken from. You wouldn't want something to be given to you at the cost of it being taken.

But from your neighbor and does that not sound. Exactly. Like you shall love right? Inner inner thoughts in our feelings and her desires and choices. You shall love your neighbor as yourself and so the Lord has set at the bookends of the 10. Really the substance of the two great commandments which is one of the reasons why this one.

So exposes our sinfulness and the classic example of instruction about reminder of that is in Romans chapter 7 when Paul is explaining how the law is good, but we are wicked. And so when the good law comes and says good things are wickedness, flares up and the commandment that he chose.

As an example of this in himself, was you shall not covet. And what happens when he hears you shall not covet covetousness springs to life inside him immediately, he is not only desiring what has neighbor has but justifying in himself, why he should get to desire it? Because he is more important than his neighbor and and all these things He doesn't use or give all those details.

But he talks about the sin in him springing to life in response in response to the commandment How many here words from scripture that exposed sin and immediately. What we do is start to rationalize to ourselves to explain why it's not really accusing or condemning me. Because I have this outer, I have that out.

We talked about that last week a little bit with respect to the righteous lie. Well, this one isn't just summary of the second, great commandment. It's also a necessary corollary consequence, a necessary consequence of the first great commandment. Because if we love the Lord, our God with all our heart, with all our soul, with all our mind, and with all our strength and we have the Lord, our God.

What else should we need? In order to be content in order to be satisfied, in order to be happy, we shouldn't need anything else. Right is Asaph. When he in Psalm 73, the first half of the Psalm is upset. He feels like he's cleansed his hands in vain. Why is he without God?

No, but he is without a bunch of things that he sees the wicked seem to have. And then what happens, what's the hinge upon which Psalm 73 turns, then he went and saw the Lord's glory in the sanctuary than he went to worship and he saw whom it is that he has.

And he saw the way the wicked will be destroyed all at once. And his glimpse of the weightiness, the goodness, the glory of God and this wasn't a part from the goodness of God to him and the fact that he would have God forever. And that if you have God, then of course anything that is actually good for you.

You will ultimately have. I was listening to someone who isn't even a believer yesterday. Recognizing that parents are trying to give their kids everything and make things easy on their kids and he's, and he said that's not how you treat someone. You love, you don't give them everything so that they don't learn to get for themselves.

You don't make everything easy so that they don't learn things, like patients, and perseverance and self-discipline. Well God gives us everything that is actually good for us because we have him. How can we be missing anything if we have him? And so ASAF says, nevertheless, I am continually with you, you take me by the hand, you guide me by your counsel and afterward you will receive me into glories.

Even when I get to glory, God will be the great. The great blessedness of glory itself. He is the heavenliness of heaven. And so he says, whom have I in heaven, but you he said, well, I've read Revelation. There are a lot of interesting things and mighty creatures and the assembly of the saints and I'm actually going to like them better when we get there because they're gonna be holy and I'm gonna be holy and it's that's gonna be pretty wonderful.

But by comparison to God, what is everything else and isn't it? The delight we have in him and his provision of it out of love for us that multiplies and makes up the substance of the delightfulness of everything else. It's the Romans 8:32 thing, he who did not spare his own son, but gave him up for us all.

How will he not also together with him freely? Give us all things. And so we come back to the 10th commandment and, yes, it's love your neighbor as yourself. You shall not cover it. Your neighbors, You shall not cover your neighbors, nor his, nor his, nor his, nor his nor anything.

That is your neighbors. Definitely. There's usual. Love your neighbor as yourself, but the you shall not cover it part also goes to the first. Great commandment. Doesn't it? You should be content with God Himself and submissive to his wisdom and his love and his goodness. So that having God himself and everything else that he has chosen to give you, by all of these means that he's appointed including things like hard work, it's not wrong to work and to save and to invest in all those things.

But having God and everything that he has appointed to you in His goodness. Shouldn't we be content? So no wonder the apostle. Paul found his sin inflamed by the 10th commandment because the 10th commandment was really a combination of the two great commandments. My dear children. We're so often discontented we're so often covetous.

I even at the beginning of our worship was Now, it's not wrong to you upset with yourself and the things that you could and should have done better and looking to God for sanctification. But that instinct or impulse that says if only all of these providences were that were different.

How much better would my life? Be what else we can tinted with God and let us be discontented? Ultimately only with everything that is against him. Be discontented with your sin. Hate it. Put it to death, It obscures your view of his glory, It inhibits, your ability to enjoy Him.

It is the thing that must be gotten rid of. So that heaven will be a heaven to you rather than a hell where the brightness of His glory will be our delight. Although that same brightness of that same glory is the horror of hell upon the wicked. So you shall not covet.

Love the Lord, your God, with all your heart. Soul, mind and strength. Love your neighbor as yourself for grant to us to grow in obedience to this commandment today. And every day of this life until he has conformed us to Christ and we have all our pleasure and God, let's pray.

Father, thank you for your word. Thank you for your law. Thank you for giving it to us in the context of your having redeemed us. Brought us out of bondage and slavery. Brought us to yourself established yourself as our very own covenant, God established us as your very own covenant people but help us O Lord for although we have you our hearts are so full of that remaining fleshliness that we easily go after other things and our discontented and are exposed as continuing to be lawbreakers, who bless your name for your son, our Lord Jesus, who refuse to worship any other who refused to put you to the test who refused to be discontented but was satisfied with you and fellowship with you and every word that proceeded from your mouth.

Help us. Now by your Holy Spirit, that this same Jesus who has atoned for us and who is our righteousness, would be the one to whom your spirit. Conforms us O Lord. I pray that my children would have long and happy lives even now that you by making their hearts more and more like what they shall be forever, would give them heaven.

Even while they are on earth that we all in our time together, in this world would be able to say, nevertheless, we are continually with you. You take us by the hand, you guide us by your counsel so that we may rejoice in you, our Lord always so that we may be able to do all things through Christ.

Who strengthens us? Namely to be content in every circumstance. Do it. We pray for, we ask it in his name, Amen.