

"The Breadth of the Commandments, Part 4"  
(Matthew 4:8-10)

Introduction: The Law of God is like a warning sign, showing us that there is danger ahead and giving us an alternate way to go, a detour, so that we might avoid that danger. Again, the Law of God is like a compass which gives us direction in life. On the compass there is a mark which reads righteousness and holiness, which is the way to Heaven and everlasting glory, and there is another mark which reads danger and destruction, which is the way to death and eternal damnation. As we go through life, we must continually check our steps by that compass, so that we avoid the way of death, and keep our feet on the path of life.

For this reason, we have been seeking to learn those principles which the Word of God gives us to understand the commandments. And we have been seeking to know how to apply them. Just because the commands are simply stated does not mean that they are easily understood. Remember the psalmist wrote, "THY COMMANDMENT IS EXCEEDINGLY BROAD" (Ps. 119:96). Here is as clear a statement as you may wish to find about anything. And yet knowing that the commandment is broad does not tell us in what ways it is broad, just as telling someone that they must love their neighbor does not tell them how they must do it, unless you add the words of explanation "as you love yourself." But we have been learning from the Scriptures themselves exactly how they are to be understood. We have seen so far that they tell us whether or not what we actually do is according to God's will. They also tell us whether or not the thoughts of our mind and the intentions of our hearts are right before God. We may do the right things, but we may have the wrong motives. We may also keep the commandments outwardly, but break them inwardly. And they also tell us that there is but one underlying sin behind all of our sins, and that is the sin of self-will. Whenever we turn off of the path of righteousness, it is always motivated by the desire to gain something for ourself. In short, the commandments show us how to love the Lord our God with all of our heart, mind, soul, and strength, and our neighbor as ourself. And this love which God requires covers a very broad range of things.

Tonight, we want to look at another principle which the Bible teaches us on how we might use the Law most profitably to guide us in the path of righteousness, and that is,

*For every command, warning, promise or threat in the Bible, its contrary, warning, command, threat or promise is also implied.*

*This may not seem very clear to you now, but it will as we look at several examples. Think of the Law as a coin with two sides. One side is positive and the other is negative, one is black and the other is white.*

I. *When the Scripture Tells You Your Duty in One Area, It Also Forbids Its Contrary Sin, And When the Bible Forbids You to Do Something, It Also Commands Its Contrary Duty.*

A. *First, for Every Duty Commanded, There Is a Sin Forbidden.*

1. Our text tonight, Matthew 4:8-10, tells us, "AGAIN, THE DEVIL TOOK HIM TO A VERY HIGH MOUNTAIN, AND SHOWED HIM ALL THE KINGDOMS OF THE WORLD, AND THEIR GLORY; AND HE SAID TO HIM, 'ALL THESE THINGS WILL I GIVE YOU, IF YOU FALL DOWN AND WORSHIP ME.' THEN JESUS SAID TO HIM, 'BEGONE, SATAN! FOR IT IS WRITTEN, 'YOU SHALL WORSHIP THE LORD YOUR GOD, AND SERVE HIM ONLY.'""

a. Notice the commandment to which Christ refers says that God

is the only One who is to be worshiped. He is the Sovereign Lord of the universe. He is high and exalted and the only One who is worthy to be praised.

- b. And since God alone is to be worshiped, it goes without saying that no other being is to be worshiped, especially not this evil usurper of God's authority, this wicked and foul demon. He is not worthy of any such honor. This would be worse than laying the honor which is due to a king at the feet of the worst scoundrel in the kingdom, or the greatest fool.
- c. That God alone is to be worshiped, demands that none other be worshiped. Here is one command with its contrary prohibition: Worship God; do not worship any other.

2. We see again in Matthew 15:4-6, another example, where we read, "FOR GOD SAID, 'HONOR YOUR FATHER AND MOTHER,' AND 'HE WHO SPEAKS EVIL OF FATHER OR MOTHER, LET HIM BE PUT TO DEATH.' BUT YOU SAY, 'WHOEVER SHALL SAY TO HIS FATHER OR MOTHER, "ANYTHING OF MINE YOU MIGHT HAVE BEEN HELPED BY HAS BEEN GIVEN TO GOD," HE IS NOT TO HONOR HIS FATHER OR HIS MOTHER.' AND THUS YOU INVALIDATED THE WORD OF GOD FOR THE SAKE OF YOUR TRADITIONS."

- a. The command is that you are to honor your father and mother. This is required of all children throughout their earthly life.
- b. But you are not only required to honor your parents, it is also required of you that you do not dishonor your parents.
- c. You see again that there is the command to honor, and the implied prohibition not to dishonor your parents.

B. And Secondly, for every Sin Forbidden, There is a Duty Commanded.

1. For a plain example of this, please turn to Isaiah 58:13-14. Here, Isaiah writes, "IF BECAUSE OF THE SABBATH, YOU TURN YOUR FOOT FROM DOING YOUR OWN PLEASURE ON MY HOLY DAY, AND CALL THE SABBATH A DELIGHT, THE HOLY DAY OF THE LORD HONORABLE, AND SHALL HONOR IT, DESISTING FROM YOUR OWN WAYS, FROM SEEKING YOUR OWN PLEASURE, AND SPEAKING YOUR OWN WORD, THEN YOU WILL TAKE DELIGHT IN THE LORD, AND I WILL MAKE YOU RIDE ON THE HEIGHTS OF THE EARTH; AND I WILL FEED YOU WITH THE HERITAGE OF JACOB YOUR FATHER, FOR THE MOUTH OF THE LORD HAS SPOKEN."

- a. Here the sin forbidden is the treading under foot of the Lord's holy day by doing your own pleasure, rather than God's. But you are not to despise the holy things of God. When you do so, you are trampling the Son of God under your feet by your continual sinning against Him, as the author to the Hebrews tells us (Heb. 10:26-29).
- b. But implied in that prohibition is the opposite command to honor that day. You are to honor it by not calling it a burden, but a delight; by not despising the day, but calling it honorable; by not doing your own things, but the things which God commands; by not seeking your own pleasure, but the pleasure of God; and by not speaking your own words, but by speaking the words which honor God and His Christ. Then, Isaiah says, you will delight in the Lord, and He will bless you.

2. Another example of the same principle is found in Matthew 5:23-24, which reads, "IF THEREFORE YOU ARE PRESENTING YOUR

OFFERING AT THE ALTAR, AND THERE REMEMBER THAT YOUR BROTHER HAS SOMETHING AGAINST YOU, LEAVE YOUR OFFERING THERE BEFORE THE ALTAR, AND GO YOUR WAY; FIRST BE RECONCILED TO YOUR BROTHER, AND THEN COME AND PRESENT YOUR OFFERING."

- a. The prohibition is that you are not to present your gift at the altar if your brother has something against you.
- b. And the command is that you are to go to your brother and be reconciled to him, and then return and offer your gift.

3. And again in Ephesians 4:28, "LET HIM WHO STEALS STEAL NO LONGER; BUT RATHER LET HIM LABOR, PERFORMING WITH HIS OWN HANDS WHAT IS GOOD, IN ORDER THAT HE MAY HAVE SOMETHING TO SHARE WITH HIM WHO HAS NEED."
  - a. The prohibition is against stealing.
  - b. The command is to do its opposite, to work that you might be able to give to those in need.
  - c. These examples from Scripture show us that for whatever is commanded in Scripture, there is a contrary thing forbidden, and for whatever is forbidden in Scripture, there is an opposite duty commanded.

II. This Also Applies to the Promises of Scripture, So that When God Promises One Thing, Its Contrary Is Threatened, and When One Thing Is Threatened, Its Contrary Is Promised.

A. For Every Promise Given in Scripture, There Is a Threat Implied.

1. Take, for instance, the promise given in Scripture for those children who will honor their parents. The fifth commandment reads, "HONOR YOUR FATHER AND YOUR MOTHER, THAT YOUR DAYS MAY BE PROLONGED IN THE LAND WHICH THE LORD YOUR GOD GIVES YOU" (Ex. 20:12). You are promised a long life if you keep this commandment.
2. But there is a curse implied if you dishonor them. Proverbs 30:17 reads, "THE EYE THAT MOCKS A FATHER, AND SCORNS A MOTHER, THE RAVENS OF THE VALLEY WILL PICK IT OUT, AND THE YOUNG EAGLES WILL EAT IT." If you dishonor your parents, you will be destroyed, and your bodies will be food for scavengers.

B. And for Every Threat in Scripture, There Is a Promise Implied.

1. In Jeremiah 18:7-10, God says, "AT ONE MOMENT I MIGHT SPEAK CONCERNING A NATION OR CONCERNING A KINGDOM TO UPROOT, TO PULL DOWN, OR TO DESTROY IT; IF THAT NATION AGAINST WHICH I HAVE SPOKEN TURNS FROM ITS EVIL, I WILL RELENT CONCERNING THE CALAMITY I PLANNED TO BRING ON IT. OR AT ANOTHER MOMENT I MIGHT SPEAK CONCERNING A NATION OR CONCERNING A KINGDOM TO BUILD IT UP OR TO PLANT IT; IF IT DOES EVIL IN MY SIGHT BY NOT OBEYING MY VOICE, THEN I WILL THINK BETTER OF THE GOOD WITH WHICH I HAVE PROMISED TO BLESS IT."
2. When the threat is spoken, the promise is implied. When the promise is spoken, the threat is also implied. And so we see that for every promise of threat, there is also given its corresponding threat or promise.

III. Uses.

- A. Knowing that this Is the Case in Scripture, How Important It Is for You to Realize that God Holds You Responsible for both Aspects of all of His Commandments.

1. You may not have any other gods before the true God, but are you revering and honoring and worshiping the One and only God with all your heart?
  2. You may not be worshiping God in the way in which He has commanded you not to, but are you fervently worshiping Him in the way that He has commanded you?
  3. You may not be dishonoring the name of the Lord by using it in vain, but how often do you honor it in the presence of His people and before unbelievers by blessing Him or by standing against those who misuse His blessed name?
  4. You may be resting on the Sabbath from your labors, but are you using the whole day in the way which God has told you to by feeding your souls and the souls of your children on the means of grace, and putting the world out of your mind?
  5. You children may be showing your parents some measure of honor, but have you been dishonoring your parents by speaking evil of them behind their backs or even to their face? And you who are adults with parents who are yet living, have you dishonored your parents in any way?
  6. You may not be committing acts of murder, but are you doing anything to preserve and promote the life and physical well-being of your neighbor by meeting some of the needs which he may have, or by pointing out anything you see that might be dangerous to him?
  7. You may not be committing adultery, but are you doing anything to help your brethren and neighbors live a more sexually pure life, by wearing modest clothing, or by keeping your conversation free from innuendos?
  8. You may not have stolen anything from your neighbor, but have you done anything to promote his material prosperity, perhaps by giving him advice on how to better manage his money, or by warning him if you see someone suspicious casing his house?
  9. You may not have slandered your neighbor, but have you done anything to promote his good name by speaking to others of his admirable qualities?
  10. You may not be coveting anything which belongs to your neighbor, but when was the last time that you rejoiced because of what the Lord has blessed him with?
  11. Have you been thinking only about what is on the face of the commandments, not realizing that there was more to them?
  12. You must remember that each of the commandments has these two aspects, these two sides of the coin. You must do the good which it commands, as well as turn away from the evil which it forbids.
- B. And How Important It Is to Realize, as Well, that Both Aspects of God's Promises and Threatenings Are Also Enforced by Him.
1. God knows that we are creatures of motivation. He knows that we need certain incentives to obedience and from disobedience.
  2. When you are offered a reward for doing something which is commanded, it helps you to put more effort into it. If your employer promises to give you a bonus if you do exceptional work, won't you will work much harder for it?
  3. The same is true of the warnings which are given. It helps us to avoid breaking the rules or the law. If you children know that your parents have threatened to spank you every time you disobey them, won't you think more carefully before you

willfully disobey them, especially if they have shown by their past discipline that they really mean what they say and are not just speaking empty words?

4. God has given to you His promises and warnings as well to give you the extra motivation that you need to do what is right and to turn from what is wrong.
  5. If you do what is right and holy, then you will be blessed as a general rule in your spiritual life, in your health, in your family, and in your business. Sometimes the Lord does not bless for His own holy ends to work holiness in His children. But as a general rule righteousness not only exalts a nation, it also exalts individuals.
  6. But if you do not do what is right in the eyes of the Lord, then what is threatened will fall upon you. It will be punishment for the unbeliever, and discipline for the believer.
- C. Above All, Never Forget that the Lord Has Given the Law to You to Be Your Teacher, to Instruct You.
1. It teaches you what God is like and what it is that pleases Him.
  2. It teaches you what you are like, and what it is in your life that is displeasing to Him.
  3. It continually points you to the cross of Christ so that you might receive the grace of God which comes through faith in Christ.
  4. And Christ constantly points you to it so that you might learn true obedience and grow in holiness.
  5. As you understand the righteous requirements of the Law, it should make you cry out with Paul, "O WRETCHED MAN THAT I AM! WHO WILL SET ME FREE FROM THE BODY OF THIS DEATH?" (Rom. 7:24).
  6. But if you have fled to Christ Jesus for refuge and are trusting in His righteousness alone for your salvation, you will also say with the apostle, "THANKS BE TO GOD THROUGH JESUS CHRIST OUR LORD!" (7:25).
  7. People of God, the Law requires perfection. And the more that you study it, the more you will understand what perfection is and the more you will see that you need the perfect righteousness of Christ to cover all of your failures. You will also see how much work the Lord has yet to do in your lives. May God grant you the grace through Jesus Christ to push on to perfection, and as you do may the light of His righteousness continue to shine brighter and brighter in your life, so that others may see Christ in you and come to know God. Amen.