

LD 44; I Cor. 13; Rom. 7:19-25; The Heart of the Law I. The Law's Internal Application II. Our Ability to Obey III. The Proper Use of the Law

Congregation of our Lord Jesus Christ, what do you delight in? We all have our interests and hobbies.

Thing that we are naturally drawn towards. But what about delight- is there something that really sets

your heart on fire? Well, as we have been seeing over the past weeks, the Law of LORD is setting the

narrow way before our feet. Like a good physician, the Law has not only looked at the external but also

the internal of the man. In exposing our sin, both the hand and the heart is in view. We are sinners who

sin- our hearts are polluted. And that is why we need the Law to tell us what is wrong with us. As we

conclude our series on the 10 Commandments this morning, we are going to see that the 10<sup>th</sup>

Commandment is not only the final but it is also unique as a commandment. Coveting deals with the

heart. So the positive way we can keep this command is by loving what is right while we hate what is

evil. So again I ask- what do you delight in? What and whom do you love? As Psalm 1:2 says- the

righteous man delights in the Law of the LORD! I am to love God and love my neighbor. So this morning

we consider this theme: Jesus Christ applies the entire law to our heart as He forbids coveting.

### **I. The Law's Internal Application**

In our first point we see that the 10th Commandment functions as a type of mirror. Not only giving us a

clear picture of ourselves, but also reflecting us back to the previous 9 commandments. Although it may

be possible to look at the external aspects of the previous 9- it is impossible to interpret this

commandment externally. In other words, this commandment is unique in that it starts with the heart-

with the desires. Like a good farmer, this commandment is not content with just cutting off the top of

the weeds. This command goes after the root! Where does sin come from? Where do wicked words

and wicked actions start? They start in the heart! So this command brings the others to bear on our

desires- our interests- our wants! In a clear way, this command deepens the entire Law! As you will

remember, the summary of the Law is to Love God with all your heart and to love your neighbor as

yourself. But now we read- to love God means that we are to desire God's way first! To love Him means that we will not only obey His commandments- but that we will love His commandments and desire to obey! To Love what God loves! If our hearts are right, our actions will follow. If we love God and His word, obedience will follow. So we could say that this commandment is dealing with love. As our text from I Cor. 13:6 put it, love does not rejoice at wrong doing, but rejoices with the truth! Let's circle back to our commandment. You shall not covet anything that belongs to your neighbor. To covet is to desire- to set your heart upon. So do not desire something that is not yours- do not sin in your desires. Now our society will say- the heart wants what the heart wants! But the Christian says- Lord give me a desire that is proper! Sanctify my wants- so that I love your word and desire to obey with all my heart! So I am to desire God's way first- teach me to hate sin and to love righteousness! As I said before, sin starts in the heart long before it is seen in the hand. In forbidding coveting, we are dealing with the preparation and planning stage of sin. Just as Achan coveted in the heart before he stretched out his hand to take the forbidden items- or when David lusted in his heart after his neighbor's wife before he took Bathsheba- we have to come to see that wrong desires are themselves a sin! So when the command reads- you shall not steal- we apply it by saying- I do not even want to steal! In forbidding adultery- I do not even want to desire my neighbor's wife! With idolatry- I do not even want to go after other gods. So the heart is clearly in focus with this command. As QA 113 concludes, with all my heart we should always hate sin and delight in righteousness.

## **II. Our Ability to Obey**

So if the 10th Commandment is uniquely focussed on the heart- dealing with our internal desires- how do we measure up? If the Law applies to inclinations- to pursuits and plans- then how do we fare? Can we say as the rich young man said in Mt. 19- all these I have kept from my youth? Or are we more like Paul who said in Rom. 7- the good I want to do I fail to perform while the evil I want to avoid I find myself doing? The fact is, we are at the same time both a sinner and a saint. Having been washed in the blood

of the Lamb, we are forgiven and redeemed. However, we are still being sanctified by the Spirit. This process of spiritual growth and development takes time and will be imperfect in this life. So instead of falsely promising that we will achieve perfection, QA 114 rightly says that even the holiest will see only a beginning of this obedience. As we also read in I Cor. 13:12- we know in part- we see dimly. But that is not to say that there will be no progress! Quite the contrary, we will see real and true spiritual growth made evident! He who began a good work in you will be faithful to complete it as Phil. 1 puts it. Or as Paul also stated in Phil. 3:12, I have not yet attained perfection, but I do continue to strive. Pressing on to make it my own because Christ Jesus has made me His own! It is because we belong to Jesus that we can and will press on! So although spiritual perfection will not be attained this side of glory ,that is not to say that we should not care nor pursue sanctification. The fact is, we can all be a lot more Christ-like than we are! It is God's desire and the Spirit's purpose that we would be holy as He is holy! So it becomes both our desire and pursuit to obey all of God's commandments from the heart . Although imperfect and only in part, we do truly begin to love God with our heart! We do start to love His Law more than honey or gold! Yes, this growth in holiness may be slow and imperfect, but it will be true and steady until we reach the goal when Jesus returns.

### **III. The Proper Use of the Law**

In our final point, the catechism is going to bring us back to where we started. Why do we need the Law? What is the point and purpose of the Law? How does it function in the Christian's life? We cannot keep it perfectly, as we just saw, so what is the use? Would a mountain climber ever attempt to ascend if he knew he would never make the summit? In our final point then we will see the proper use of the Law. This is in contrast to the improper use of the Law. The improper or wrong use of the Law is the self-justify. We do not look at the Law in order for us to feel good about ourselves, our own works or merit! The Law is not mean to be a means by which we earn our salvation nor as a way to pay God back for saving us. Rather, as QA 115 puts it, there are two proper uses of the law. Two main uses in the church.

The first use of the Law is to show us our sin and misery. As we saw way back in LD 2, how do you come to know your sin and misery? The Law of God tells me. So the first use of the Law is to expose our sin and misery. To remind us and convince us of our need for a savior. At the end of these past 10 weeks, I hope you have repeatedly seen that you are a sinner in need of a savior! The application is clear- the Law is meant to humble us in order to drive us to Jesus Christ! The Law cannot save- our obedience to the commands cannot make us right with God! God will not settle for anything less than perfection! We need a righteousness that is greater than the Pharisees! This perfect righteousness has been secured by Jesus alone- and is ours only as it is granted to us by grace through faith! But that is not to say that we are done with the Law- nor that the Law is done with us! The second use of the Law is also clear- we use the Law as a rule of gratitude and pattern of thanksgiving! The Law tells us how to live- what we are to do now that we have been saved by Jesus Christ! As you will remember, good works are those that are done in thanksgiving and in accordance with God's commands! In this way, our works are good fruit- the right response to our being saved. So the Law of God is to be read- and taught in this church- in order to show us as a congregation how God wants us to live as thankful and obedient children! To apply this use, we are to love God and love our neighbor because we are filled with joyful thanksgiving to God for such a glorious salvation. He gives us the will and the way- so it becomes our desire and pursuit! Jesus not only saves His people by His blood, He also sanctifies them by His Spirit. This growing in holiness is evident in our growing in humility and in our growing in thankful obedience. So although it is true that we are both sinners and saints, it is also true that we are saints who are being sanctified.

As we conclude our series through the 10 Commandments, the Law of Love is being impressed upon us. Jesus Christ applies the entire law to our heart as He forbids coveting. It is the Father's design to make us more like Christ- to mold us by the Spirit into the image of the Son. He is the perfect righteous man who loved God's law day and night. So I ask again, what do you delight in? What do you take pleasure in? May it be that we all delight in the Law of the Lord as we meditate upon it day and night!