

**CHURCH OF THE REDEEMER**

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<b>Series:</b>	<b>The Heidelberg Catechism</b>		Pastor/Teacher
<b>Number:</b>	<b>74</b>		Gary L.W. Johnson
<b>Text:</b>	<b>Ephesians 4:25-32</b>		
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**Fraudulent Activity**

**Lords Day 42**

**Question 110. What does God forbid in the eighth commandment?**

**Answer:** God forbids not only those thefts, (a) and robberies, (b) which are punishable by the magistrate; but he comprehends under the name of theft all wicked tricks and devices, whereby we design to appropriate to ourselves the goods which belong to our neighbour: (c) whether it be by force, or under the appearance of right, as by unjust weights, ells, measures, fraudulent merchandise, (d) false coins, usury, (e) or by any other way forbidden by God; as also all covetousness, (f) all abuse and waste of his gifts. (g)

(a) 1 Cor.6:10 Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. (b) 1 Cor.5:10 Yet not altogether with the fornicators of this world, or with the covetous, or extortioners, or with idolaters; for then must ye needs go out of the world. Isa.33:1 Woe to thee that spoilest, and thou wast not spoiled; and dealest treacherously, and they dealt not treacherously with thee! when thou shalt cease to spoil, thou shalt be spoiled; and when thou shalt make an end to deal treacherously, they shall deal treacherously with thee. (c) Luke 3:14 And the soldiers likewise demanded of him, saying, And what shall we do? And he said unto them, Do violence to no man, neither accuse any falsely; and be content with your wages. 1 Thess.4:6 That no man go beyond and defraud his brother in any matter: because that the Lord is the avenger of all such, as we also have forewarned you and testified. (d) Prov.11:1 A false balance is abomination to the LORD: but a just weight is his delight. Prov.16:11 A just weight and balance are the LORD'S: all the weights of the bag are his work. Ezek.45:9 Thus saith the Lord GOD; Let it suffice you, O princes of Israel: remove violence and spoil, and execute judgment and justice, take away your exactions from my people, saith the Lord GOD. Ezek.45:10 Ye shall have just balances, and a just ephah, and a just bath. Ezek.45:11 The ephah and the bath shall be of one measure, that the bath may contain the tenth part of an homer, and the ephah the tenth part of an homer: the measure thereof shall be after the homer. Ezek.45:12 And the shekel shall be twenty gerahs: twenty shekels, five and twenty shekels, fifteen shekels, shall be your maneh. Deut.25:13 Thou shalt not have in thy bag divers weights, a great and a small. Deut.25:14 Thou shalt not have in thine house divers measures, a great and a small. Deut.25:15 But thou shalt have a perfect and just weight, a perfect and just measure shalt thou have: that thy days may be lengthened in the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee. Deut.25:16 For all that do such things, and all that do unrighteously, are an abomination unto the LORD thy God. (e) Ps.15:5 He that putteth not out his money to usury, nor taketh reward against the innocent. He that doeth these things shall never be moved. Luke 6:35 But love ye your enemies, and do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again; and your reward shall be great, and ye shall be the children of the Highest: for he is kind unto the unthankful and to the evil. (f) 1 Cor.6:10 Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. (g) Prov.23:20 Be not among winebibbers; among riotous eaters of flesh: Prov.23:21 For the drunkard and the glutton shall come to poverty: and drowsiness shall clothe a man with rags. Prov.21:20 There is treasure to be desired and oil in the dwelling of the wise; but a foolish man spendeth it up.

**Question 111. But what does God require in this commandment?**

**Answer:** That I promote the advantage of my neighbour in every instance I can or may; and deal with

him as I desire to be dealt with by others: (a) further also that I faithfully labour, so that I may be able to relieve the needy. (b)

(a) Matt.7:12 Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets. (b) Eph.4:28 Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth.

“A Christian’s life,” wrote Thomas Manton, “is a constant hymn to God, or a continued act of worship; ever behaving himself as in the sight of God, and directing all things as to his glory.”<sup>1</sup> The Christian life, contrary to popular opinion (even in many Christian circles) is not dominated by negatives. On the other hand the genuine Christian life is certainly not free from negatives. It must be noted, however, that the New Testament never promotes the Christian life merely in terms of “do this and don’t do that.” The Christian life is seen in the light of motive. This is the key to understanding Christian conduct. This is the Apostle Paul’s point in the passage before us. “The apostle is not merely urging a new and higher standard of morality on people. That is an utterly futile thing. We cannot be genuinely better by mere moral suasion. That is not it at all. Rather, Paul is demanding a high form of behavior precisely because something decisive has already taken place. We have already been made new in Christ. That is why we should and must act like it. We, like Lazarus, have been brought out of death into life by Christ. As part of that spiritual miracle our old grave clothes, which were appropriate for a corpse but not for a living body, have been taken off, and we have been reclothed in wedding garments in preparation for that great wedding supper of the Lamb. From this point on we should act like members of the wedding party.”<sup>2</sup>

CONTEXT: The Apostle has in the preceding section enforced the general duty of holiness upon his readers. They are to “put off” the traits and characteristics of their old way of life and to “put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.” Paul now moves to the particulars; he insists on certain specific behavior.

NOTE: In this section (vv. 25-32) there are 12 verbal imperatives. There are FIVE areas of behavior that Paul pinpoints, areas where he actually demands a manifestation of change. For the most part Paul’s method in this passage follows a definite pattern. He is making “practical” deductions from “theological” facts or truths. First, he addresses the negative, then enforces the positive and adds the motive for the prescribed behavior.

B.B. Warfield has observed that the Apostle Paul over and over again underscored the ongoing validity of the moral Law of God. “Turn to the Epistle to the Ephesians, sister letter to that of the Colossians, written at the same time and sent by the hand of the same messengers, and read from the twenty-fifth verse of the fourth chapter on, a transcript from the second table of the Decalogue, in its depth and universalizing touch, conceived quite in the spirit of our Lord’s own comments on it. ‘Wherefore,’ says Paul, ‘putting away falsehood, speak ye each one truth with his neighbor; for we are members one of another.’ That is the form which the Ninth Commandment takes in his hands. ‘Be ye angry and sin not; let not the sun go down upon your wrath; neither give place to the devil.’ This is Paul’s version of the Sixth Commandment. ‘Let him that stole, steal no more; but rather let him labor, working with his hands the thing that is good, that he may have whereof to give to him that hath need.’ That is how he commends the Eighth Commandment. ‘Let no corrupt speech proceed out of your mouth, but such as is good for edifying as the need may be, that it may give grace to them that hear.’ Thus Paul subtilizes the requirements of the Seventh Commandment.

“If we wish, however, fully to comprehend how Paul was accustomed to Christianize and universalize the Ten Commandments while preserving nevertheless intact their whole substance and formal authority, we should turn over the page and read this (Eph. vi. 2); ‘Children, obey your parents in the Lord; for this is right. Honor thy father and mother (which is the first commandment with promise) that it may be well with thee and thou mayest live long in the earth.’ Observe, first, how the Fifth Commandment is introduced here as the appropriate proof that obedience to parents is right. Having asserted it to be right, Paul adduces the commandment which requires it. Thus the acknowledged authority of the Fifth Commandment as such in the Christian Church is simply taken for granted.

Observe, secondly, how the authority of the Fifth Commandment thus assumed as unquestionable, is extended over the whole Decalogue. For this commandment is not adduced here as an isolated precept; it is brought forward as one of a series, in which it stands on equal ground with the others, differing from them only in being the first of them which has a promise attached to it; ‘which is the first commandment with promise.’ Observe, thirdly, how everything in the manner in which the Fifth Commandment is enunciated in the Decalogue that gives it a form and coloring adapting it specifically to the Old Dispensation is quietly set aside and a universalizing mode of statement substituted for it; ‘that it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth.’ All allusion to Canaan, the land which Jehovah, Israel’s God, had promised to Israel, is eliminated, and with it all that gives the promise or the commandment to which it is annexed any appearance of exclusive application to Israel. In its place is set a broad declaration valid not merely for the Jew who worships the Father in Jerusalem, but for all those true worshippers everywhere who worship him in spirit and in truth. This may seem the more remarkable, because Paul, in adducing the commandment, calls special attention to this promise, and that in such a manner as to appeal to its divine origin. It is quite clear that he was thoroughly sure of his ground with his readers. And that means that the universalizing reading of the Ten Commandments was the established custom of the Apostolic Church.”<sup>3</sup>

### **I. THE CHANGE FROM LYING TO TRUTH – v. 25**

- A. The negative - “put off (cf. v. 22) the lie”
- B. The positive – “speak (present imperative) truth”
- C. The motive – “for we are all members of one body.” The theological truth of the church, the Body of Christ, Paul viewed as the motive for practical honesty in the Christian life.

### **II. THE CHANGE FROM SINFUL ANGER – vv. 26, 27**

- A. The positive – “Be angry” (permissive imperative). It is not a sin to be angry as such, but...
- B. The negative – “do not sin” (present imperative). “Do not let the sun go down on your anger” – when anger is cherished and harbored, then it is sin. The word for anger in this last clause is PARORGISMŌI, refers to an angry mood or disposition. A violent irritation is meant, expressed by either hiding one’s self from others or by flaming looks, harmful words, inconsiderate actions.
- C. The warning – “do not give (present imperative) the devil a place.” The expression refers to giving the DIABOLŌI, lit. slanderer, room or a sphere of operation in unbridled anger of all the sinful actions mentioned in this section, Paul pinpoints the “tongue” as the thing most susceptible to Satanic influence, comp. with James 3:1-9.

### **III. THE CHANGE IN ACQUISITION v. 28**

- A. The negative – “do not steal” (present imperative)
- B. The positive – “labor in his work.” The word for “labor” is KOPIATŌ, present imperative, lit. to grow weary, to labor with effort.
- C. The motive – “in order that (HINA purpose clause) he may have opportunity to share.” The “Christian work ethic” is not simply one of building our own nest egg, but is to extend to the needs of the Body of Christ.

### **IV. THE CHANGE IN SPEECH – vv. 29-30**

- A. The negative – “no foul speaking” (present imperative). The word “foul” is SAPROS, corrupt, putrid, rotten, worthless, disgusting. It not only refers to filthy language but incorporates harmful and destructive, abusive speech.

B. The positive – “only that which is helpful”

C. The motive – “for the up-building (edification) of others.” The lit. Greek rendering is “give grace to those who hear,” cf. Colossians 4:6.

## V. THE CHANGE IN TEMPER – vv. 31, 32

A. The negative – “get rid of” (ARTHĒTŌ, aorist passive imperative, to pick up and carry away, to make a clean sweep) all bitterness (PIKRIA, “a figurative term denoting that fretted and irritable state of mind that keeps a man in perpetual animosity – that inclines him to harsh and uncharitable opinions of men and things – that makes him sour, crabby and repulsive in his general demeanor – that brings a scowl over his face and infuses venom into the words of his tongue<sup>4</sup>”). And rage (THUMOS, a temporary outburst of anger at persons or things) and anger (ORGĒ, a deep-flowing, settled attitude) and brawling (KRAUGĒ, strife, clamor, loud shouting) and slander (lit. blasphemy) and all kinds of malice (KAKIAI, bad heartedness, the root of the rest). There is a natural progress: bitterness, rage, anger, loud shouting, and slander. The first three produce the last two, all are summed up under the term “malice.”

B. The positive – “you be (present imperative) tenderhearted, forgive freely (present imperative).”

C. The motive – “just as (KATHŌS, in this manner or after this pattern) also God in Christ forgave you.”

**CONCLUSION:** We often hear zealous charismatics say something like this, “Once you receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit you will be equipped to deal with anything. Simply rely on the Holy Spirit to guide you and He will direct you in a life without sin.”<sup>5</sup> Is this so? Noted New Testament scholar Donald Guthrie observed, “In spite of his profound teaching about the new life and the guidance of the Spirit, Paul was too much of a realist to suppose that his converts would at once reach maturity in their moral judgments. He deals with issues as they arise and this adds considerably to his value as an ethical teacher.”<sup>6</sup> We stand in need to be constantly hearing the voice of the Holy Spirit in Holy Scripture. The more we are in tune to the directives of Scripture the more we will be able to keep in step with the Holy Spirit. The more we understand the grace of God in the Gospel the more we will be able to conduct ourselves in a manner that is honoring to Christ.

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<sup>1</sup> *The Complete Works of Thomas Manton* II (rpt. Maranatha, 1977), p. 25.

<sup>2</sup> J.M. Boice, *Ephesians: An Expository Commentary* (Baker, 1977), p. 167.

<sup>3</sup> B.B. Warfield, An address delivered at the Fourteenth International Lord’s Day Congress held in Oakland, California, July 27-August 1, 1915, published in *Sunday the World’s Rest Day*, 1916, pp. 63-81, and in *The Free Presbyterian Magazine*. Glasgow, 1918, pp. 316-319, 350-354, 378-383. Also as a pamphlet, Glasgow, 1918.

<sup>4</sup> J. Eadie, *A Commentary On the Greek Text of the Epistle of Paul to the Ephesians* (T&T Clark, 1883), p. 219.

<sup>5</sup> We will examine v. 30 and the expression “do not grieve the Holy Spirit” in some detail in our next study.

<sup>6</sup> D. Guthrie, *New Testament Theology* (IVP, 1981), p. 914.