

**Class 11b:** The purpose of this class is to understand the introductory principles, which we will use to understand the *Decalogue* in the following two studies. We will examine 8 rules for understanding each word or commandment of the *Decalogue*.

**WLC 99 Q. What rules are to be observed for the right understanding of the ten commandments?**

**A.** *For the right understanding of the ten commandments, these rules are to be observed:*

*1. That the law is perfect, and bindeth everyone to full conformity in the whole man unto the righteousness thereof, and unto entire obedience for ever, so as to require the utmost perfection of every duty, and to forbid the least degree of every sin*(Ps. 19:7; James 2:10; Matt. 5:21,22)

- The *Decalogue* requires a perfect keeping of the law. We can never be satisfied with an ability to keep part of the law some of the time. It requires *perfect, personal, and perpetual* obedience. (James 2:10, Matt 5:21, 22).
- We do not make these observations to be harsh. We study what Jesus taught about the perfect righteousness of the law so that we will be humbled under the utter impossibility for us to keep it in our flesh and so that we will strive to keep the whole law through faith in Christ, who works in us to sanctify us. Sanctification is the work wherein in God conforms our whole man into the image of God. So, if you think that your sanctification need ends with one sin, you don't understand the *Decalogue*. We all need sanctification in every part of the law.

*2. That it is spiritual, and so reacheth the understanding, will, affections, and all other powers of the soul; as well as words, works, and gestures.* (Rom. 7:14; Deut. 6:5 compared with Matt. 22:37,38,39; Matt. 5:21,22,27,28,33,34,37,38,39,43,44)

- The Pharisees thought that they kept the law perfectly because they kept it externally, but Jesus burst their bubble of self-righteousness in the Sermon on the Mount.
- God requires obedience from our external actions. He also requires a willing heart to obey, a love for His law, thoughts that are held captive to His law, and a tongue which is conformed to His law. He requires perfect righteousness both externally and spiritually.

*3. That one and the same thing, in divers respects, is required or forbidden in several commandments.* (Col. 3:5; Amos 8:5; Prov. 1:19; 1 Tim. 6:10)

- For example, both the fourth and eight commandments require work. (Amos 8:5)
- Paul taught that coveting breaks the second commandment and tenth commandment. When we covet someone's *something*, we make it an idol in our heart (Col 3:5). Paul also taught that love for money will cause all sorts of sin, so the idolatry of worshipping money may lead to breaking all the commandments – murder, lying, coveting etc.

*4. That as, where a duty is commanded, the contrary sin is forbidden; (Isa. 58:13; Deut. 6:13 compared with Matt. 4:9,10; Matt. 15:4,5,6) and, where a sin is forbidden, the contrary duty is commanded;( Matt. 5:21-25; Eph. 4:28) so, where a promise is annexed, the contrary threatening is included;( Exod. 20:12 compared with Prov. 30:17) and where a threatening is annexed, the contrary promise is included.(Jer. 18:7,8; Exod. 20:7; Ps. 15:1,4,5; Ps. 24:4,5)*

- This rule means that we must consider both sides of each commandment, whether it is phrased as a positive or negative command. An easy example is how Paul explains the 8<sup>th</sup> commandment in Eph 4:28. There, he forbids stealing and commands working at the same time.

5. *That what God forbids, is at no time to be done; (Job 13:7,8; Rom. 3:8; Job 36:21; Heb. 11:25) what he commands, is always our duty;( Deut. 4:8,9) and yet every particular duty is not to be done at all times.( Matt. 12:7)*

- The rule means that it is never good or right for us to break a negative command. Paul forbids *doing evil that good may come*. War is a complicated case to consider. It appears that in the exception of war, both killing and lying have been permitted.
- The rule also means that some positive duties are meant for certain times, such as *Sabbath* observance.

6. *That under one sin or duty, all of the same kind are forbidden or commanded together with all the causes, means, occasions and appearances thereof, and provocations thereunto. (Matt. 5:21,22,27,28; Matt. 15:4-6; Heb. 10:24,25; 1 Thess. 5:22; Jude 23; Gal. 5:26; Col. 3:21)*

- Christ teaches in Matt 5 and 15 that all of the same kind of sins are included under the name of one sin.
- Another way of saying it is that we must interpret the *Decalogue* in the context of the whole Bible, not just Ex 20 and Deut 5. The WLC does this. If will apply discipline to understand what the entire Bible says about each commandment, you will have enough reason for humility for a lifetime.

7. *That what is forbidden or commanded to ourselves, we are bound, according to our places, to endeavour that it may be avoided or performed by others, according to the duty of their places. (Exod. 20:10; Lev. 19:17; Gen. 18:19; Josh. 24:15; Deut. 6:6,7)*

- A parent has an additional responsibility over his/her child. The same is true for pastors and elders when they influence the members of the church. Those in authority are held accountable for influencing those under them to sin. A Christian employer cannot require his employee to work on the Sabbath. A Christian businessman cannot sell immoral products. A parent cannot demand that her child lie, cheat, steal, break the Sabbath etc. In whatever place God has given to us, we must work to make sure that those under our authority may also avoid what is forbidden and do what is commanded in God's law.

8. *That in what is commanded to others, we are bound, according to our places and callings, to be helpful to them;(2 Cor. 1:24) and to take heed of partaking with others in what is forbidden them. (1 Tim. 5:22; Eph. 5:11)*

- Eph 5:11 and 1 Tim 5:22 calls us to not participate in the sins of others.
- Sometimes we have not committed a sin, but if we are not careful in our involvement with our friends, we can participate in their sin. For example, if your friend shows up to give you a ride in a stolen car, you cannot ride with him. Otherwise, you would participate in his sin.