

DEVOTIONAL AID FOR 24 MAY 2021 – 30 MAY 2021



**UPPER
HUNTER**
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Dear church family,

This week, the Heidelberg Catechism takes us to consider the Tenth Commandment as well as God's law as whole.

The Tenth Commandment is found in Exodus 20:17, "You shall not covet your neighbour's house; you shall not covet your neighbour's wife, or his male servant, or his female servant, or his ox, or his donkey, or anything that is your neighbour's." Among other things, this commandment not to covet teaches us that God not only commands us to obey Him in matters of outward appearance but also inwardly. In other words, God is interested in our hearts. Sometimes we wrongly think that the Old Testament was all about external obedience while Jesus changed that in the New Testament. Not so. God had been demanding heart-obedience in the Old Testament as much as in the New Testament.

But, more to the point of this commandment, what are we to do in light of this commandment? Kevin DeYoung helps us to see this commandment in relation to Jesus's words: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbour as yourself. On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets." (Matthew 22:37–40) To covet in the sense of wanting to take what someone else, to take something at the expense of another person is to break the second commandment: "Love your neighbour as yourself." But that is not all. To covet in the sense of being discontent with what I already have, wanting something more or something other is to desire that thing above God since God has apportioned all things according to His wisdom and goodness. It is idolatry and we'd be breaking the first commandment, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind."¹

When the Tenth Commandment is taken seriously, in fact, any of God's law is taken seriously, we realise we can never obey any of them perfectly. Thankfully, God knows that, and He loves us still as the gospel reminds us. So we do not lose heart. When the law and the gospel are working as they are intended by God, we acknowledge and confess our sins before God, trusting Christ's grace to forgive and transform us, and we strive to live God's way more and more as the Holy Spirit empowers us.

I hope this week's devotional aid exposes idols in our hearts. And, at the same time, may it encourage us to run to Christ for mercy again and again.

Yours in Christ,

Timothy Lee

<https://www.upperhunterpc.com>

¹ I was helped to realise and articulate the points raised in this paragraph by reading Kevin DeYoung's *The Good News We Almost Forgot*, p208.

THE HEIDELBERG CATECHISM²

Lord's Day 44

Q113) What is God's will for you in the Tenth Commandment?

A) That not even the slightest thought or desire contrary to any one of God's commandment should ever arise in my heart. Rather, with all my heart I should always hate sin and take pleasure in whatever is right.

Q114) But can those converted to God obey these commandments perfectly?

A) No. In this life even the holiest have only a small beginning of this obedience. Nevertheless, with all seriousness of purpose, they do begin to live according to all, not only some, of God's commandments.

Q115) No one in this life can obey the Ten Commandments perfectly: why then does God want them preached so pointedly?

A) First, so that the longer we live the more we may come to know our sinfulness and the more eagerly look to Christ for forgiveness of sins and righteousness. Second, so that, while praying to God for the grace of the Holy Spirit, we may never stop striving to be renewed more and more after God's image, until after this life we reach our goal: perfection.

EXODUS 20:17

"You shall not covet your neighbour's house; you shall not covet your neighbour's wife, or his male servant, or his female servant, or his ox, or his donkey, or anything that is your neighbour's."

We all know that feeling. We notice our neighbour's house that's bigger and nicer than ours, and we feel a certain jealousy or discontent with our own. It doesn't have to be the house. It could be a car on the road, a good looking woman or man on a screen, or a better paying job only other people seem to score. It could even be about one's own children, about their health, achievements, abilities, behaviour, whatever. We may have legitimate desires for something good. But such desire is different from jealousy or discontentment. How are you going in guarding your hearts from coveting?

Prayer

Heavenly Father, thank you for giving me so many great blessings that I enjoy. Above all else, thank you for giving your Son Jesus Christ for my salvation so I may now call you Father. Please help me to learn contentment and not to covet. Help me to trust your wisdom, goodness, and grace always. In Jesus's name, amen.

PHILIPPIANS 3:12-16

12 Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own. 13 Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, 14 I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. 15 Let those of us who are mature think this way, and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal that also to you. 16 Only let us hold true to what we have attained.

God saves us despite our moral imperfections. But it is not because God ignores our moral imperfections. A great cost was involved in saving us: Christ died for our sins to save us! Nor does God leave us with our moral imperfections. We are being transformed into Christ's image, His perfect sinless life. We will not be perfect until Jesus's return, but we are still to pursue growth in Christlikeness. The question is: are you pursuing it? Are you striving to grow in Christlikeness?

Prayer

Gracious Father, thank you for your grace in saving me from sin and the judgment I rightly deserve. Please grow in me a more fervent desire to be like Jesus, your holy and perfect Son. Please help me to press on like Paul did so your glorious grace will be more and more visible and praised. In Jesus's name I pray. Amen.

² The text of the Catechism is usually from <https://threeforms.org/heidelberg-catechism/>, but time to time, for the sake of clarity, I have also adopted the translation used in *The Good News We Almost Forgot* by Kevin DeYoung.