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**Advanced Bible Correspondence Course**  
**Lesson 44A: The Law of God - Tenth Commandment**

**LORD'S DAY 44**

**Q. 113. WHAT DO THE TENTH COMMANDMENT REQUIRE OF US?**

**ANSWER: THAT EVEN THE SMALLEST INCLINATION OR THOUGHT, CONTRARY TO ANY OF GOD'S COMMANDMENTS, NEVER RISE IN OUR HEARTS; BUT THAT AT ALL TIMES WE HATE ALL SIN WITH OUR WHOLE HEART, AND DELIGHT IN ALL RIGHTEOUSNESS (A).**

**(A) ROMANS 7:7**

**The root of evil**

The tenth commandment is simple, but it goes very deep and touches the core of all the commandments. It not only sets forth that an evil deed is sin, but states that also all wrong thoughts and even all wrong desires are sin, even if the desire, thought, or intention never materializes. God not only observes our mouth and hands, but also observes our heart, for that is the center of our lives, the station from where everything departs.

Paul, pious and very zealous for the Jewish law, thought prior to his conversion that he complied with the law in every aspect because he had never done any shameful deeds. The Jews taught that the desire to sin was not sin, as long as it did not come to fruition. This can also be our thinking: we have never cursed, lied, stolen, murdered, or committed adultery, and always served God and not idols, always kept His day and service, and honoured our parents. But still Christ's judgment is severe: *"Hypocrites! For ye are like unto whitened sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness"* (Matthew 23:27).

By the light which God caused to shine in Paul's heart, he learned the true depth of the law. God showed him that also each desire to sin is a heinous sin before God. Paul wrote: *"Nay, I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had*

*not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet..... For I was alive without the law (that is: without knowing the true depth of the law) once, but when the commandment came (the depth became clear to him), sin revived, and I died” (Romans 7:7&9).*

The tenth commandment requires of us not to let the least, the smallest sinful thought or desire enter our hearts. We must wholeheartedly be enemies of *all* sin and of everything that entices us to sin. God requires our heart.

In a positive sense, we should have a desire and a delight in all righteousness and in keeping all God’s commandments. The first Psalm gives us an example of someone who lives this way: *“But his delight is in the law of the Lord; and in His law doth he meditate day and night: (Psalm 1:2).*

**Q. 114. BUT CAN THOSE WHO ARE CONVERTED TO GOD PERFECTLY KEEP THESE COMMANDMENTS?**

**ANSWER: NO: BUT EVEN THE HOLIEST MEN, WHILE IN THIS LIFE, HAVE ONLY A SMALL BEGINNING OF THIS OBEDIENCE (A); YET SO, THAT WITH A SINCERE RESOLUTION THEY BEGIN TO LIVE, NOT ONLY ACCORDING TO SOME, BUT ALL THE COMMANDMENTS OF GOD (B).**

**(A)I JOHN 1:8, ROMANS 7:14-15, ECCLESIASTES 7:20, I CORINTHIANS 13:9;**

**(B)ROMANS 7:22, PSALM 1:2**

## **Perfectionists**

After dealing with the Ten Commandments, two more questions come up.

It has become clear what God requires of us in His law. It goes *very* far. We may not do any sinful deeds, not even have a single sinful thought and desire in our heart. Each moment of our life, we must live in perfect love to God and our neighbour. We must even love our enemy and do well to him.

Then a question arises. No, not the question if unconverted ones, people without a new heart, can keep these commandments. That is clear: it is impossible. We see this every day around us. But the question is: Can believers, those who are converted to God, keep these commandments perfectly?

There are people who say: Yes, that is possible! One must strive for perfect sanctification, and the Holy Spirit can enable you to achieve that perfection already in this life. These people who think that Christians here on earth in this life can achieve perfection are called perfectionists. These people erroneously refer to expressions of the Bible, such as: *“Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord” (Hebrews 12:14);* and: *“We know that whoever is born of God sinneth not; but he that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not” (I John 5:18).*

However, we may never play off one scriptural text against another. We must always compare Scripture with Scripture, considering one statement in context with another one. Only then do we know what the biblical teaching is.

The Catechism answers the question as to whether we can keep God's commandments perfectly: even the holiest man has in this life only a small beginning of this obedience which God requires. *That is the biblical answer.* The old Preacher already said: *"For there is not a just man upon the earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not"* (Ecclesiastes 7:20). And Paul, while converted wrote: *"For we know that the law is spiritual: but I am carnal, sold under sin. For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I"* (Romans 7:14&15).

Paul called the law spiritual, because it not only requires an outward obedience, which is sufficient in the eyes of men, but also an inner perfection, which is good in God's eyes. When he said of himself that he was carnal, he did not mean that he had a body, but that he still had a sinful nature. He could not yet completely stamp out all the sinful desires and thoughts he had in himself. In one of his letters, old John agreed with Paul. He wrote to believers: *"If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us"* (I John 1:8).

He who by the light of the Holy Spirit sees the depth and extent of God's commandments knows what God requires, namely, a perfect love every moment to God and to our neighbour. And then the holiest child of God knows: "Oh, I have only a very small beginning of this."

We can only be perfectionists if we look alone at the outside and view sin according to what sin is in the eyes of men.

### ***Questions:***

1. *Give clear evidence that the tenth commandment requires very much of us.*

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2. *What do we mean by perfectionism?*

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*Evaluator:* \_\_\_\_\_

Meditation: *"I know that in me (that is in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing."*

*Romans 7:18*

This is the knowledge which puffeth not up; but like love, it edifies the soul in deep humility, while it excites overflowing gratitude in the heart to Christ for His righteousness to justify such vile sinners: it is the knowledge of regenerate souls. *I know*; not only doctrinally, in notion and theory, but it is a confirmed truth, by heart-felt experience; I know it from day to day; I have proved it again and again, "that in my flesh dwelleth no good thing." Paul's judgment of himself was confirmed by experience.

But, was not Paul a most eminent apostle and holy saint? Yes: still he confesses publicly before God, angels and men, that he was the subject of a nature which is "earthly, sensual and devilish." If no good thing dwelt in his flesh, is it not implied that every evil dwelt there? Doubtless he would be so understood. Were "evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, blasphemies" in the flesh of this holy saint? Yes, his knowledge of the total corruption of his fallen nature agrees with his Lord's doctrine. Matthew 15:19. He had been a murderer and blasphemer by practice; then he was in a state of ignorance and unbelief; but now he was regenerated, his state changed, and his practice altered, therefore, surely, his flesh could not be so bad. Yes, it was just the same: the flesh, the old man, the corrupt fallen nature is and ever will be the same in the regenerate: "It ever lusts against the Spirit." Galatians 5:17

Why is this woeful experience of Paul's left upon record? For our profit. That we might judge and try ourselves by it. If we are taught by the same Spirit, we shall have the same humbling views of our flesh. Our flesh is not worse than Paul's, nor was his better than ours. If we are left in nature's pride, we shall join the ignorant cry of those who say, "all who are convinced of sin greatly undervalue themselves."

We also here learn not to be cast down with despondency, nor to give way to despairing thoughts, though we find every evil and nothing but evil in our flesh; for this cures us of all confidence in the flesh, to which we are prone, but it opposes the faith of the Gospel.

Look then and go entirely out of yourself: look wholly to and trust entirely in the Lord Jesus and His righteousness, that though you have no confidence in the flesh, you may ever rejoice in Him; this is the character and conduct of a true believer. Philippians 3:3. Adore the Holy Spirit, Who, when you had no goodness to deserve it, no fitness to qualify for it, but all in you to oppose it, gave you a new birth into Christ, in whom you have every spiritual good.

Therefore, "walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh."

Galatians 5:16.

*Taken from: "A Spiritual Treasury for the Children of God" by W. Mason*