

Name: _____



Advanced Bible Correspondence Course

Lesson 40A: The Law of God - Sixth Commandment

Q. 105. WHAT DOES GOD REQUIRE IN THE SIXTH COMMANDMENT?

ANSWER: THAT NEITHER IN THOUGHTS, NOR WORDS, NOR GESTURES, MUCH LESS IN DEEDS, I DISHONOUR, HATE, WOUND, OR KILL MY NEIGHBOUR, BY MYSELF OR BY ANOTHER (A); BUT THAT I LAY ASIDE ALL DESIRE OF REVENGE (B); ALSO, THAT I HURT NOT MYSELF, NOR WILLFULLY EXPOSE MYSELF TO ANY DANGER (C); WHEREFORE ALSO THE MAGISTRATE IS ARMED WITH THE SWORD, TO PREVENT MURDER (D).

(A) MATTHEW 5:21-22, 26:52, GENESIS 9:6; (B) EPHESIANS 4:26, ROMANS 12:19, MATTHEW 5:25, 18:35 (C) COLOSSIANS 2:23, MATTHEW 4:7; (D) GENESIS 9:6, EXODUS 21:14, MATTHEW 26:52, ROMANS 13:4.

To love our neighbour

The content of the sixth commandment requires little explanation. The words of explanation in the Catechism are very clear. In this commandment God protects the life of our neighbour. Why? It is because man was created after God's image. First of all, it must be repeated that the neighbour is not only a member of our family or a friend of ours, but any fellow human being with whom we come into contact. It is even those who are hostile towards us in word or deed. Christ has said so plainly: "*But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that despitefully use you, and persecute you*" (Matthew 5:44).

Further, it should be emphatically pointed out that not only wrongdoing toward our neighbour is condemned here, but also angry gestures and words, and even malicious thoughts. These are the thoughts, words, and gestures which so often proceed from hatred, malice, and jealousy. Here the word of the psalmist is certainly applicable: "*Thy commandment is exceeding broad*" (Psalm 119:96). Would it ever happen in our lives that there is not a single hour that we do not sin against this commandment? Also when in *thought* we wish the death of our neighbour, this is murder in the sight of God!

It could very well happen that we, rightly or wrongly, become angry with someone. However, Paul wrote: *be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath*” (Ephesians 4:26).

What is man?

He, who by the light of God’s Spirit, recognizes the reality of his heart will acknowledge how foul and unholy his heart is. The true image of man is pictured to us by Paul: *“Their throat is an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips: whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness: their feet are swift to shed blood: destruction and misery are in their way: and the way of peace have they not known”* (Romans 3:13-17).

And this is the picture of each person, although, for us, blinded as we are because of self-love, this is difficult to acknowledge.

It is especially applicable here that God in His goodness restrains evil. He still restrains many from harming others to a serious degree. If He did not do this, society would totally disintegrate. We can see this sometimes in an individual or in people, to whom God gives, as it were, free reign. Then it is possible that people, who were decent and right-minded before, can at times become worse than animals. Every day we see and hear examples of this in the lives of individuals and of entire communities.

To this restraint belongs the God-given authority of the government to punish. Paul wrote: *“For he (the government) is the minister of God to thee for good”* (Romans 13:4). The government must, if needs be, punish with the sword, that is, with the death penalty. Murder and intentional manslaughter must, according to God’s ordinances, be punished with the death penalty. After the flood, at the beginning of the new human race, God told Noah that which is applicable for the entire human race, *“Whoso sheddeth man’s blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made He man”* (Genesis 9:6).

The new man

In principle, we will again obey the sixth commandment when in conversion we put off the old man and *“put on the new man, which is created after God in righteousness and true holiness”* (Ephesians 4:24). Then we look unto Christ, *“who did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth: who, when He was reviled, reviled not again; when He suffered, He threatened not; but committed Himself to Him that judgeth righteously”* (1Peter 2:22-23). Christ desires to strengthen us in the battle, because we must often engage in a bitter struggle against ourselves. We are called to cast off all vengeance. We must even banish all desire for vengeance out of our heart when someone has ill-treated us. People can – sometimes for

years, yes, even for their entire lives – be consumed by revengeful thoughts. What a blessing when God sets one free from such a distressing snare.

This does not mean that the wrong somebody inflicts on us or on somebody else should not be punished. However, then we give it over to those who are called and authorized to punish. Then we also give it over to God. Paul admonishes:

“Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is Mine; I will repay, saith the Lord” (Romans 12:19).

We must not do any harm to our neighbour. This also clearly means that we should refrain from all hateful remarks and bad treatments of foreigners, for they also are our neighbours, who were created after God’s image, even though they may perhaps serve other gods.

Harming ourselves

The Lord forbids also to harm ourselves. I must not injure or cause damage to myself, by an unhealthy lifestyle, which shortens our lives: overeating, smoking, use of drugs, or drinking too much alcohol. We can do this also by reckless dealings in our work or in traffic, or by inflicting injuries to ourselves and by suicide, because also then we violate the image of God.

Abortion and euthanasia

This prohibition also includes abortion and euthanasia. God gave each one of us the spirit of life. He is the *“God of the spirits of all flesh”* (Numbers 16:22). Only He is authorized to take back this spirit.

Abortion is murder forbidden by God. The child in the mother’s womb is a living, although yet unborn creature, to whom God gave the spirit of life. While expecting the birth of John the Baptist, Elizabeth said to Mary, the future mother of Jesus: *“For, lo, as soon as the voice of thy salutation sounded in mine ears, the babe leaped in my womb for joy”* (Luke 1:44).

Naturally we may and must try to alleviate or to take away suffering through palliative medical care. However, relief from suffering by euthanasia is never an act of charity.

God’s children will desire to bear the suffering, since it is never worse than the sufferings of their Master, Christ. Moreover, God is able by His grace, to miraculously relieve the suffering when He gives a foretaste of the salvation that is awaiting them. For those who are not children of God, euthanasia is never a deliverance from suffering. On the contrary! A worse suffering will follow in hell!

Questions:

1. Does God only forbid manslaughter and murder in the sixth commandment?

2. *Why are abortion and euthanasia forbidden?*

Evaluator: _____

Meditation – *"But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that despitefully use you, and persecute you." Matthew 5:44.*

Love is the very badge and characteristic of a disciple of Jesus. Love is of God. All tempers and passions which are contrary to love "are earthly, sensual, and devilish." Let no disciple say, This is a hard saying, who can hear it? Nay, it is the command of thy loving Saviour; he practised it, he has left thee an example. To this end thou art born from above of the Spirit of love; and possessed with that "faith which worketh by love." Therefore, though hard and impossible it may seem to carnal reason and to flesh and blood, yet we are under the indispensable obligation to follow the steps and obey the commands of that Jesus who loved us, and died for us, though his enemies. He hath blessed us, prays for us, and does good unto us, though we have rebellious natures, which are at enmity and hatred against Him. Never, never, till thine enemy's hatred and variance against thee exceed thine to thy Lord, art thou at liberty to dispense with this command. It is for the health and profit of thy soul. In keeping this command of love, verily there is a great reward of inward peace and consolation from the God of love. So shalt thou enjoy the witness of his Spirit, of thine adoption.

Tell thy Lord of thine enemies, and pray for them by name. Behold the blessed effects of love upon the heart of a most bitter and implacable foe in 1 Samuel 24. See how David, the man after God's own heart, acts; how his faith works by love. When his persecuting foe, Saul, was delivered into his hand, love would not suffer David to do him any hurt. Yea, love smote his heart for only cutting off the skirts of his robe. Hear the pathetic cry of the bloody-minded Saul; struck with astonishment and melted by love, "Is this thy voice," such thy conduct to me, "my son David; and he wept. Thou art more righteous than I: thou hast rewarded me good for evil: the Lord reward thee for it." Admire and imitate. Love is the weapon of our spiritual warfare; by it thou art sure to prevail against and conquer every enemy. Therefore "if he hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink; for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire upon his head." Thus strive to burn up his

wrath and melt him into affection. But suppose it hath not this effect upon him: it shall turn to the peace and comfort of thy own soul. Thou shalt enjoy that peace and love which is in Christ Jesus. "Walk in love." Ephesians 5:2.

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