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## **Advanced Bible Correspondence Course**

### **Lesson 44B: The Law of God – Tenth Commandment Cont'd**

#### **A small beginning**

In the Bible, we as believers are called “saints”. How can that go together with what the Catechism says, namely, that even the holiest men have only a small beginning of perfect obedience?

It speaks here of a beginning. In the first place it is a new principle which lies within them. It is on the basis of that principle that they are called “saints.” Why? First of all, it is because they are viewed by God as united with Christ, as being clothed with His righteousness. They are holy because Christ is holy. This holiness does not lie in us, but in Christ. Paul wrote: *“But of Him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption” (I Cor. 1:30)*. Christ has borne the punishment of sin in our stead and for us; this is imputed to us and in this way we are again seen as righteous in God’s eyes. However, Christ also lived in perfect holiness. He only! Now His perfect holiness is also imputed to us; His obedience is placed on our account.

From this new principle, the birth of the new man, there also arises the beginning of a new life. Thankfulness for the great grace brings God’s children to the desire of living holily before the Lord. The Holy Ghost has renewed their hearts, and they received a new will and new desires.

Out of that desire they also begin to live according to God’s commandments, even though it is only a small beginning, because the old man (the sinful lusts) has not yet died and is sometimes still so strong. The same Paul who said: *“For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do” (Rom. 7:19)*, also said that God’s children *“walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit” (Rom. 8:1)*. And this he said about God-fearing servants or slaves doing the will of God from the heart (Eph. 6:6).

That new life springs forth from the root of regeneration which God has worked. That new life is imperfect in this life. Perfection will only be there when God's child is delivered from all sinful desires and deeds at death.

### **Antinomians**

Precisely opposed to perfectionism is the error of the antinomians (the Greek word anti = opposed; nomos = law). These are people who are against the law. They say: "Only in Christ we are holy, and therefore we do not need to obey the law anymore." There have even been those who have said that the more sins one commits, the greater grace will be experienced. Jezebel the prophetess was apparently such a person, about whom the old apostle John had to write in the letter to Thyatira (Revelation 2:20).

Even though they appear opposites, perfectionists and antinomians actually resemble each other in a way. Perfectionists do not know how deeply sin is rooted in us, and the antinomians do not know how serious sin is. Neither of them has ever been shown the seriousness of sin by the Holy Spirit. They also know nothing of the *miracle* of the gracious forgiveness of sins.

However, there are many Christians who are slightly antinomian, Christians, even believing Christians, who in reality do not consider sin to be so terrible. Sometimes they hide themselves behind Paul, who also said that he was still sold under sin. They say, "Nobody is perfect anyway." However, also this attitude is very unbiblical. Then we grieve God. Then, if we are true believers, we grieve the Holy Spirit who dwells in us. Then we bring a spiritual darkness on us. Paul's warning is serious when he wrote: "*And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption*" (Ephesians 4:30).

This same Paul, who said that he was sold under sin, also said that he did not walk after the desires of the flesh, but after the Spirit; that he desires to do with all diligence what the Holy Spirit wants him to do (Romans 8:1). He wrote in another epistle: "*Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus*" (Philippians 3:12).

It is for that reason that the Catechism says that already here in this life, with a sincere resolution, God's children begin to live, not only according to some, but *all* the commandments of God.

Through the Holy Spirit who dwells in them there is a beginning of that entirely new obedience. Their deepest desire is to live holily before the Lord already here on earth. They say with the Psalmist: "*And I will delight myself in Thy commandments, which I have loved*" (Psalm 119:47). They long for heaven, where they can and will eternally and perfectly serve the Lord.

**Q. 115. WHY WILL GOD THEN HAVE THE TEN COMMANDMENTS SO STRICTLY PREACHED, SINCE NO MAN IN THIS LIFE CAN KEEP THEM?**

**ANSWER: FIRST, THAT ALL OUR LIFETIME WE MAY LEARN MORE AND MORE TO KNOW OUR SINFUL NATURE (A), AND THUS BECOME THE MORE EARNEST IN SEEKING THE REMISSION OF SIN, AND RIGHTEOUSNESS IN CHRIST (B); LIKEWISE, THAT WE CONSTANTLY ENDEAVOR AND PRAY TO GOD FOR THE GRACE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT, THAT WE MAY BECOME MORE AND MORE CONFORMABLE TO THE IMAGE OF GOD TILL WE ARRIVE AT THE PERFECTION PROPOSED TO US, IN A LIFE TO COME (C).**

(A) ROM. 3:20, I JOHN 1:9, PS. 32:5; (B) MAT. 5:6, ROM. 7:24&25; (C) I COR. 9:24, PHIL. 3:12-14

### **The purpose of preaching the law strictly**

The last question continues the discussion from the previous questions. If we, even as believers, cannot really keep God's commandments in this life, why does God then confront us with these commandments each time in the preaching, and then even so very strictly. In some churches the Ten Commandments are read to the congregation every Sunday morning. Does God then not know that we cannot keep those commandments? Indeed He does, but God does this for two reasons.

In the first place, He wants to make provision that by the continual preaching of the commandments we will, by looking into the mirror of the law, in this way learn more and more to discover how sinful our nature, our character, really is. Why? It is because without a thorough knowledge of our sins, we will never seek Christ. The intention of the continual preaching of the law is that we become increasingly desirous for the forgiveness of our sins through Christ and for the righteousness which He merited through His holy life. This is what we will seek more and more with Him. Then we will not become arrogant, but humble, meek Christians.

In the second place, by the preaching of His holy law God purposes that we always pray for the grace of the Holy Ghost fervently and without ceasing. Then we begin to ask Him to renew us more and more, for then it is our desire that God's image becomes more and more evident in us. God created man after His image: in true knowledge, righteousness and holiness. In Paradise Adam could do God's will perfectly. We lost the image of God through the fall, and because of our spiritual death we no longer know the will of God and no longer desire to do the will of God. However, through regeneration by the Holy Spirit, the image of God will again be restored in us. Then we desire to be renewed more and more, in order to again show the image of God, in knowledge, righteousness, and holiness. Then we look forward to the time, after this our life, that we will again be a perfect image bearer of God in eternal glory. Therefore here on earth it is already applicable to the believer: *"But his delight is in the law of the Lord; and in His law doth he meditate day and night"* (Psalm 1:2).

**Questions:**

1. *What do we mean by antinomianism?*

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2. *Why does God have the commandments so strictly preached if we cannot keep them perfectly anyway? Give two reasons.*

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

Meditation: "Jehovah Tsidkenu" : "The Lord our Righteousness" by R.M. McCheyne

I once was a stranger to grace and to God,  
I knew not my danger, and felt not my load;  
Though friends spoke in rapture of Christ on the tree,  
"Jehovah Tsidkenu" was nothing to me.

I oft read with pleasure, to soothe or engage,  
Isaiah's wild measure and John's simple page;  
But e'en when they pictured the blood-sprinkled tree,  
"Jehovah Tsidkenu" seemed nothing to me.

Like tears from the daughters of Zion that roll,  
I wept when the waters went over His soul;  
Yet thought not that my sins had nailed to the tree  
"Jehovah Tsidkenu": 'twas nothing to me.

When free grace awoke me, by light from on high,  
Then legal fears shook me, I trembled to die;  
No refuge nor safety in self could I see,  
"Jehovah Tsidkenu" my Saviour must be.

My terrors all vanished before the sweet name.  
My guilty fears banished, with boldness I came,  
To drink at the fountain, life-giving and free:  
"Jehovah Tsidkenu" is all things to me.

"Jehovah Tsidkenu," my treasure and boast,  
"Jehovah Tsidkenu," I ne'er can be lost:  
In Thee I shall conquer, by flood and by field,  
My cable, my anchor, my breastplate, and shield.

Even treading the valley, the shadow of death,

This “watchword” should rally my faltering breath;  
For if from life’s fever my God set me free,  
“Jehovah Tsidkenu” my death-song shall be.