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Advanced Bible Correspondence Course

Lesson 40B: The Law of God - Sixth Commandment Continued

Q. 106. BUT THIS COMMANDMENT SEEMS ONLY TO SPEAK OF MURDER?

ANSWER: IN FORBIDDING MURDER, GOD TEACHES US, THAT HE ABHORS THE CAUSES THEREOF, SUCH AS ENVY (A), HATRED (B), ANGER (C), AND DESIRE OF REVENGE; AND THAT HE COUNTS ALL THESE AS MURDER (D).

(A) PROVERBS 14:30, ROMANS 1:29, (B) 1 JOHN 2:11; (C) JAMES 1:20, GALATIANS 5:19-21; (D) 1 JOHN 3:15

Gestures, words, and thoughts

The explanation of the Catechism raises an objection. Does not the commandment speak only of murder? Does it not go too far by also condemning *all* malicious gestures, words, and even thoughts? The answer is short and clear: these gestures, words, and thoughts stem from envy, hatred, wrath, and revenge, and these are the root of manslaughter. Murder issues forth from these evils. Therefore they are put on the same level as murder. It is the same evil. Only one goes further than the other.

What is the beginning of murder? How did it begin with the first murderer, Cain? An evil, envious thought arose in Cain's heart when he saw that God accepted the offering of his brother, but not his offering. That thought drove him to murder this brother (Genesis 4).

We think of the Lord Jesus, who in his sermon on the mount said: "*Whosoever shall say to his brother, (...) Thou fool, shall be in danger of hellfire*" (Matthew 5:22).

God, in His goodness, warns us against envy and hatred in the heart. He said to Cain, who was envious of his brother Abel and therefore wanted to slay him:

"Why art thou wroth? And why is thy countenance fallen? If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted and if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door"
(Genesis 4: 6-7).

Q 107. BUT IS IT ENOUGH THAT WE DO NOT KILL ANY MAN IN THE MANNER MENTIONED ABOVE?

ANSWER: NO: FOR WHEN GOD FORBIDS ENVY, HATRED AND ANGER, HE COMMANDS US TO LOVE OUR NEIGHBOUR AS OURSELVES (A); TO SHOW PATIENCE, PEACE, MEEKNESS, MERCY AND ALL KINDNESS, TOWARDS HIM (B), AND PREVENT HIS HURT AS MUCH AS IN US LIES (C); AND THAT WE DO GOOD, EVEN TO OUR ENEMIES (D).

(A) MATTHEW 22:39, 7:12, ROMANS 12:10; (B) EPHESIANS 4:2, GALATIANS 6: 1-2, MATTHEW 5:5, ROMANS 12:18, LUKE 6:36, MATTHEW 5:7, 1 PETER 3:8, COLOSSIANS 3:12; (C) EXODUS 23:5; (D) MATTHEW 5:44-45, ROMANS 12:20.

The demand to love

God's command is first of all positive: it demands love. God asks us in His commandment to love our neighbour. Therefore in the sixth commandment we also are called to do good to our neighbour, as much as we are able. To do this, a loving disposition is necessary. This will become evident by showing patience, peacefulness, meekness, and all friendliness. These are Christian virtues. Many people laugh at these virtues. Then you are not hard enough and you will perish in this cruel world. You have to stand up for yourself, for someone else will not do that for you. Charity begins at home. If you are too meek, you are unworldly and do not fit in this modern world. Then you will soon be trampled underfoot.

However, the Lord Jesus said in the Sermon on the Mount: *"Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth"* (Matthew 5:5). That means all the earth. Hard hearted people can, in this life, sometimes through force of word and deed gather a lot of money, power, and respect, but at the end, if they do not repent, God will cast them, into eternal damnation. The meek will inherit the new earth.

Meekness

Meekness is not a weak kind-heartedness and spinelessness or cowardliness, which always stays clear of difficulties. Meekness is proof of a good disposition toward our fellow man. It manifests itself first of all in being able to endure injustice that has been inflicted on us. A meek person does not fight for himself, but suffers for Christ's sake. *"Consider Him that endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself"* (Hebrews 12:3).

Meekness and forbearance go together. Paul wrote: *"I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, with all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love"* (Ephesians 4:1-2).

Meekness is not the same as the much praised tolerance. Many people who argue in favour of tolerance say that everybody should know for himself what he wants to do or say. However, this very often does not stem from love for one's neighbour, but from indifference for the well being of his neighbour.

Love must be in evidence

The good disposition which is required of us must also be shown in deeds.

Wherever we are able, we must do well to our neighbour, and also to our enemies.

We must help them and support them in word and deed in order to assist them in all things which are truly good for them according God's law.

Neither must we be indifferent towards them if something evil comes upon them or threatens them. We must, if at all possible, help to avert anything that could inflict damage on them. This is the contrast with the selfishness and the individualism of the modern Western society. There we can see what the abandonment of God's good commandments leads to: Many are victims of that individualism and live a cold and lonely life. Thankfully there are still many people who through God's goodness feel the call to offer help to their neighbour in need, whether close by or far away. This shows the blessing of this commandment.

Questions:

1. What is biblical meekness?

2. How do we show love to our neighbour?

3. Is showing love to our neighbour more or less rewarding than hatred? Explain.

Evaluator:_____

Meditation - *"Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy"* Matthew 5: 7

It is not meet that man who will not forgive should be forgiven, nor shall he who will not give to the poor have his own wants relieved. God will measure to us with our own bushels, and those who have been hard masters and hard creditors, will find that the Lord will deal hardly with them. "He shall have judgment without mercy, that hath shewed no mercy".

This day let us try to give and to forgive. Let us mind the two bears – bear and forbear. Let us be kind, and gentle and tender. Let us not put harsh constructions upon men's conduct, nor drive hard bargains, nor pick foolish quarrels, nor be difficult to please. Surely we wish to be blessed, and we also want to obtain mercy: let us fulfil the condition, that we may earn the beatitude. Is it not a pleasant duty to be kind? Is there not much more sweetness in it than in being angry and ungenerous? Why, there is blessedness in the thing itself! Moreover, the obtaining of mercy is a rich reward. What but sovereign grace could suggest such a promise as this? We are merciful to our fellow-mortal in pence, and the Lord for give us *"all that debt."*

Taken from "The Cheque-book of the Bank of Faith" by C.H. Spurgeon

