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THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

BY: C. D. COLE

The ten commandments give us the requirements for a good society. If everybody kept the ten commandments we would have heaven on earth; no sin, no shame, no sorrow, no pain, no tears, no death. This world is a bad society because the ten commandments are ignored by the masses and not perfectly kept by anybody.

Let us look them over briefly. *And God spake all these words, saying, I am the Lord thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. Thou shalt have no other gods before me. Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me; And shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments. Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain; for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain. Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labor, and do all thy work: But the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates: For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day, and hallowed it. Honour thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth*

thee. Thou shalt not kill. Thou shalt not commit adultery. Thou shalt not steal. Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour. Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing that is thy neighbour's." Exodus 20:1-17.

The first four regulate men's duty towards God; the last six have to do with men's duty to one another. The first four commandments say that God must be put first, that man must not make any object for worship, that His name must not be used lightly, and that the Sabbath must be kept holy. The last six call for honour to parents, forbid murder, adultery, theft, lying, and covetousness.

In these ten commandments we have the eternal standard of what is right. These commandments did not begin with man except in the written form. They were written upon the conscience from the beginning of human history. Idolatry, murder, adultery, theft, lying and covetousness have always been sin. Adam and Eve broke the first commandment when they followed the Devil's lie rather than God's word of truth. Cain broke the sixth commandment when he killed Abel. All the things forbidden in the ten commandments were wrong long before God gave them to Israel through man. Sin did not begin in the time of man, it began with Adam the father of the human race. John says that sin is lawlessness, and Paul says in Romans 5:13, *"For until the law sin was in the world: but sin is not imputed when there is no law."* Sin was in the world before the law

of man and that sin is not changed when there is no law. Death as the wages of sin was experienced from Adam to now.

The Lord Jesus Christ divided the law into two groups. When a lawyer asked Him which was the greatest command in the law, *"Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment,"* Matthew 22:37-38. He thus binds the first four into one and interprets it as love for God. Then he said, *"And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself,"* Matthew 22:39. *"Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law,"* Romans 13:10. And so the ten commandments may be summed up in one word: love. And so this is a wicked world, a bad society because of the lack of love: love for God and love for our fellowman. If you ask what is the matter with this world we might say, "It is people: people like you and me and others like us who do not love God and one another." I am now speaking of people in their natural state apart from the new birth. *"Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God."* I John 4:7.

A sinful race cannot meet the demands of the law of God. Nobody

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LEARNING TO PRAY

BY: C. D. COLE

"And it came to pass, that, as he was praying in a certain place, when he ceased, one of his disciples said unto him, Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples," Luke 11:1.

INTRODUCTION: Jesus was praying in a certain place. The disciples were with him and listened to him. When He had finished one of his disciples said, "Lord, teach us to pray." This request suggests several things. First, there must have been an obvious difference between their praying and His. Their prayers, like most of the prayers one hears today, must have been, for the most part, perfunctory, stereotyped, listless, and cold. They could see the difference and were greatly impressed. They wanted to improve in their prayer life.

Another thing, we have to learn to pray. Prayer is an art. Somebody has said that by the very constitution of our nature we are praying creatures, so that we pray by instinct. And there is truth in the statement. Wherever you find men, you will find religion, and wherever you find religion you will find men praying, they are seeking to contact the god they worship and fear. This very instinct is implanted in human nature. Irreligious people; so called, will call upon some god in a crisis.

But the instinct to pray is the very norm of the Christian life. Every Christian prays to the true God who is his Father. He prays by instinct. Prayer is a part of the birth pangs, or rather, the cry of the new born.

But the instinct to pray is raw and uncultivated and undisciplined. Prayer is the most rudimentary of the Christian attitudes and needs to be improved upon. Unless we learn to pray, we will

continue to pray by mere instinct. We will instinctively turn to God in prayer when we are in need, when we are in danger or in a crisis. In times of trouble we turn to the true God just as instinctively as a hurt or frightened child seeks the refuge of its mother's arms.

When we pray by instinct and not as a matter of habit, our prayers are apt to be self-centered. We may never get beyond the begging stage. Jules Romaines observed people in church as they bowed their heads in silent prayer, wondered what they were saying, and surmised that they were presenting such pleas as these:

"O God of heaven, vouchsafe to heal my leg! to fill my shop with customers. Help me to find out if my servant John is robbing me! O God, cure my sore eyes! Save me, O God, from being drunk so often!

Lord, let my son pass his examination! Help me to make her fall in love with me! My God, if only I could get some work! My husband makes a martyr of me, Let me die!

Another danger, when we pray by mere instinct, is that it is likely to be spasmodic and occasional. This kind of prayer is during the storm; when the winds cease, and the sun shines, the praying stops. As soon as the danger is past or the pressure relieved or the sickness gone, the prayer ceases. When we pray by mere instinct, we are always driven to our knees by a situation that has us licked. And there can never be any joy in such praying. It is always and only a time of agony. I am not saying we should never pray in a time of crisis, but that is not the only time to pray. There is a joyful time to pray as well as a time of need.

This leads us to say that there are other kinds of prayer besides begging. We are beggars and God

wants us to ask Him for blessings. But to beg is not all of praying. Other forms of prayer are adoration, thanksgiving, intercession, and confession.

A general definition of prayer makes it intercourse with God. In prayer we talk to the unseen but real God. Sometimes we need to come to Him in confession of sin. *"If we confess our sins he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness,"* I John 1:9. And prayer should often take the form of adoration. In the model prayer Christ taught that we should first hallow his name. That means we should sanctify or set His name apart from all other names. And since the Name of God stands for what He is, we should think of Him as separate and apart and above and beyond all others. We should think of Him as solitary and alone, the incomparable One. This will keep us from idolatry, from trying to make a likeness of God.

There should be thanksgiving in our praying. *"Be careful for nothing but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God,"* Philippians 4:6. Then there should be the prayer of intercession. We should intercede for others, we should want our Father's blessings to fall upon others, even upon our enemies. We are to pray for them that despitefully use us and persecute us.

Why do we pray so little? It is because we have not learned the art of praying. The instinct to pray has not been developed and disciplined. To those who might say that we do not have time to pray, the words of Al Ghazzali, The Moslem mystic, cuts like a knife. "If you are never alone with God, it is not because you are too busy; it is because you don't care for Him, don't like Him."

To learn to pray we must be much in the conscious presence of God. We cannot adore God unless we dwell in conscious knowledge of Him. And we cannot know Him apart from the Scriptural revelation of Him. The Scriptures reveal Him in His glorious attributes and marvelous works. To see who God is and what He has done and can do, is to draw the heart out in praise and worship. Thomas Goodwin, one of the Puritans, says that he knew men who came to God for nothing else but just to come to Him. He who likes good company should like to be in God's presence, that is, consciously in His presence. We need to practice the presence of God. Prayer is fellowship with God. In prayer we are in agreement with God. We think His thoughts after Him. We think of sin as He thinks. You cannot pray and be in love with sin. *"But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear,"* Isaiah 59:2. *"If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me,"* Psalms 66:18. It is impossible for the man who is superficial and selfish and in love with sin on his feet to become a saint on his knees.

To learn to pray takes time and practice. Proficiency in prayer comes only with long practice. It demands just as much patience and industry and devotion as men give to any other work, such as painting and sculpture and music.

The only way to get beyond the impulsive, ejaculatory, spasmodic prayer, prompted by some sort of crisis, is deliberately to cultivate the practice of daily prayer. In prayer we need to copy the musician, bent on the mastery of his instrument, and refuse to allow anything to interfere with the practice of prayer.

can be saved by keeping the law for nobody can keep it. *"Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be,"* Romans 8:7. *"For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh,"* Romans 8:3. *"Is the law then against the promises of God? God forbid: for if there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law,"* Galatians 3:21.

The function of the law is not to save, but to show men the need of salvation. *"Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin,"* Romans 3:19-20. *"Moreover the law entered, that the offence might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound,"* Romans 5:20. *"What shall we say then? Is the law sin? God forbid. 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,"* Romans 7:7. If we honestly measure ourselves by the ten commandments, we will realize that we have sinned and come short of the glory of God. Before Paul did this he thought he was all right. *"For I was alive without the law once: but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died,"* Romans 7:9. As if to say, when I saw what the law demanded, I realized that I was a sinner, and quit bragging as a self-righteous Pharisee. My lost friend, have you weighed yourself in the balances of God's law and found yourself wanting or lacking in righteousness? If you haven't, God has weighed you and found you wanting. And you had better agree with Him and realize that you are lost. Now when a person realizes he cannot save himself by

keeping the law; that is, by living right, he is ready to hear about a Saviour.

Thanks be unto God: he has provided a Saviour. *"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life,"* John 3:16. The Bible makes it so plain what Jesus Christ did to save sinners. *"Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree,"* Galatians 3:13. *"In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace,"* Ephesians 1:7. *"Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus,"* Romans 3:24.

Thanks be unto God again: He has made it plain in His word just what a sinner must do in order to be saved. The Bible says that we are

saved by faith or trust in what Jesus Christ did at Calvary. *"For then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world: but now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself."* Hebrews 9:26. The sinner must trust Him as having done this. *"For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit,"* I Peter 3:18. *"For by grace are ye saved through faith: and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God. Not of works, lest any man should boast,"* Ephesians 2:8-9. *"Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace; to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed; not to that only which is of the law, but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham; who is the father of us all,"* Romans 4:16. If one adds anything to his faith in Christ for salvation he does away with grace. *"I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness come by the law, than Christ is dead in vain,"* Galatians

2:21. For a sinner to think he can save himself by keeping the law, i.e. by living right, he does away with the need of grace and makes the death of Christ a vain or empty thing. *"If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater: for this is the witness of God which he hath testified of his Son. He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself: he that believeth not God hath made him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son. And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son,"* I John 5:9-11.

Now back to the law for a moment. The sinner cannot be saved by keeping the law nor can the believer in Christ keep the law, as he wants to keep it. Paul thought of the law as holy and just and good. *"For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my*

members," Romans 7:22-23. *"For I know that in me (that is in my flesh), dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not,"* Romans 7:18.