

Heidelberg Catechism 113 –The Mother Command

Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ: You will hear how to keep the 10th law today dealing with covetousness. What is covetousness? Covetousness (贪婪) is an insatiable desire (不知足的欲望) for that which doesn't belong to you.

Our headings are:

Prohibited Things in Law 10

Prescribed Things in Law 10.

Our goals are: That you **will learn to see the scope of covetousness (how it is the source for all other law-breaking), and that you'll call on your Redeemer to help you keep this law properly.**

Q&A 113 Q. WHAT IS GOD'S WILL FOR US IN THE TENTH COMMANDMENT?

A. That not even the slightest thought or desire contrary to any one of God's commandments should ever arise in my heart. Rather, with all my heart I should always hate sin and take pleasure in whatever is right.

Prohibited Things

1. Roman Catholics and Lutherans break this 10th law into 2 laws. (1. Don't covet your neighbor's house. 2. Don't covet your neighbor's wife, etc.) But the 2nd part of the command is an explanation of the 1st part. The 2nd part adds details. You see, "**House**," as in "You shall not covet your neighbor's house," is used in the Bible usually to mean everything a man has or owns. So a man's wife was part of his house, his servants were part of his house and his animals were part of his house. Why then did the RC's make 2 commands out of this one? It seems that they wanted to join commands 1 & 2 together so they could cover for their idolatry (偶像崇拜) .

2. This 10th command forbids you from lusting after that which does not belong to you. Lusting leads to death. Ill: As long as the water is outside of the ship, the ship is fine. But when water starts to enter the ship panic, confusion and terror take over. Similarly, when covetousness enters and takes over your heart it leads to man sins. Some examples:

Solomon pointed out that covetousness leads adultery.

Proverbs 6:25 Do not **lust after her beauty in your heart**, Nor let her allure you with her eyelids. (你心中不要恋慕她的美色，也不要被她的媚眼勾引。)

Apostle Paul further illustrated this frustration with his own sinful desires that led to other sins.

Romans 7:7 What shall we say then? Is the law sin? Certainly not! On the contrary, I would not have known sin except through the law. For I would not have known covetousness unless the law had said, "You shall not covet." 8 **But sin, taking opportunity by the commandment, produced in me all manner of evil desire.** For apart from the law sin was dead.

The Scriptures are replete with (充满) examples of lust for food that led to rebellion and severe punishment.

Lust for riches often leads to stealing. This is the seed bed for socialism.

So you see why this is called the “mother” command.

Why does man lust in the first place? Man is narcissistic 自我陶醉的. He loves his face in the mirror and he is enamoured with (沉迷于) his own pleasure and profit. He becomes self-absorbed (只顾自己的, 自恋的) and doesn't care for others.

James 3:14 But if you have **bitter envy and self-seeking in your hearts**, do not boast and lie against the truth. 15 This wisdom does not descend from above, but is earthly, sensual, demonic. 16 For where envy and self-seeking exist, confusion and every evil thing are there. (你们心里若怀着苦毒的嫉妒和纷争, 就不可自夸, 也不可说谎话抵挡真道。这样的智慧, 不是从上头来到, 乃是属地的, 属情欲的, 属鬼魔的。在何处有嫉妒纷争, 就在何处有扰乱, 和各样的坏事。)

God forbids you from becoming frustrated when you don't get the thing you want or when you see others prospering.

3. God forbids you from murmuring (发牢骚, 抱怨) about what you have or don't have, like Israel murmured as they left Egypt for Canaan and lusted for the foods of Egypt. Remember the anger of God at their murmuring!

Numbers 11:4 Now the mixed multitude who were among them yielded to intense craving (贪欲之心); so the children of Israel also wept again and said: "Who will give us meat to eat? 5 "We remember the fish which we ate freely in Egypt, the cucumbers, the melons, the leeks, the onions, and the garlic;

God forbids you from **complaining when others advance in life and you don't.**

4. Are there specific actions that God prohibits in this law?

a. **Law 10 forbids things like lotteries (彩票) that offer ridiculously high prizes and thus promote** covetousness in men's hearts – usually in poor men's hearts.

b. **Law 10 forbids pornography 色情物品 which titillates 挑逗 and evoke 激起 covetous thoughts men's hearts.**

c. **Law 10 forbids your from holding tightly to this world's possessions.** You hold loosely because you recognize that all of this world's possessions will burn. Bugs and washing machines will destroy the best clothes you have. If you don't hold tightly you won't have to go to therapy (治疗) if you lose everything. And if you don't hold tightly to things you will have time to use your hands to work for heavenly possessions.

Ecc 2:11 Then I looked on all the works that my hands had done and on the labor in which I had toiled; And indeed **all was vanity and grasping for the wind.** There was no profit under the sun.

5. What are consequences of Covetousness? Covetousness brought deadly plagues (致命的灾祸) on Israel. Covetousness cost Eve and Jezebel their lives. Covetousness cost Rehoboam his throne. Covetousness cost David a child. Learn from them. Then there are eternal consequences – which are much worse than physical death.

Prescribed Things

1. God requires that you have a right heart. This may seem like a strange thing to deduce 推断 from the 10th command, yet it is clearly implied. Consider what the Psalmist wrote:

Psalm 19:9 The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever; The judgments of the LORD are true and righteous altogether. 10 More to be desired are they than gold, Yea, than much fine gold; Sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb. 1 Moreover by them Your servant is warned, And in keeping them there is great reward. 12 Who can understand his errors? Cleanse me from secret faults. 3 Keep back Your servant also from presumptuous sins; Let them not have dominion over me. Then I shall be blameless, And I shall be innocent of great transgression. 14 Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart Be acceptable in Your sight...

If your heart is not right with God, you will never keep his laws. The right heart **meditates on God's law.**

Of course if you don't desire the finer things in life you will covet the ordinary things like wealth, women, and songs. You will see those ordinary things as fundamentally superior. So the Psalmist, knowing his own weakness, reminded himself of **God's laws – the finer things in life.** The point is, when your heart is taken up with proper desires-finer things (对更美之事的渴慕), you will learn to bar the gates of your mind so that selfishness does not sneak in. God's Words build faith. It is not wrong to desire to earn enough to provide comfortably for your family. But **a heart taken up with better things will cause you to love the Lord** and to love your neighbor better. Furthermore, **when you have a strong – rock solid - faith in Christ you won't worry about the future** and that in itself becomes a cure for much covetousness.

Remember Christ words of encouragement in this:

Matthew 6: 26 "Look at the birds of the air, for they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? 27 "Which of you by worrying can add one cubit to his stature? (27 你们哪一个能用思虑, 使身量多加一肘呢?) 28 "So why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies (百合花) of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin (它也不劳苦, 也不纺线);

2. God requires that you learn contentment (知足) ...with an emphasis on learn – as it is unnatural to be contented.

Philippians 4:11 Not that I speak in regard to need, for I **have learned** in whatever state I am, to be content: 12 I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound. Everywhere and in all things I have learned both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. 13 I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me. (我并不是因缺乏说这话, 我无论在什么景况, 都可以知足, 这是

我已经学会了。我知道怎样处卑贱，也知道怎样处丰富，或饱足、或饥饿、或有余、或缺乏，随事随在，我都得了秘诀。我靠着那加给我力量的，凡事都能作。）
How do you learn this: Remember Christ's words through the Apostle. Know that you have Christ!

Hebrews 13:5 Let your conduct be without covetousness; be content with such things as you have. For He Himself has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you." (你们存心不可贪爱钱财；要以自己所有的为足；因为主曾说：“我总不撇下你，也不丢弃你。”)

Psalms 16:5-O LORD, You are the portion of my inheritance and my cup; You maintain my lot. 6 The lines have fallen to me in pleasant places; Yes, I have a good inheritance.

You must be contented because you know how much you really have. Yes, you must work hard, but you balance it “satisfaction with what you have.” Christ gave you salvation, his Holy Spirit, his Word, and his Sacraments!

3. God prescribes (指示) that you covet spiritual things. Remember it is God who is your eternal reward, not a beautiful wife, deposits in the bank or expensive vacations!

Philippians 3:13 Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, 14 I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. 20 For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, 21 who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself. (20 我们却是天上的国民；并且等待救主，就是主耶稣基督，从天上降临。21 他要按着那能叫万有归服自己的大能，将我们这卑贱的身体改变形状，和他自己荣耀的身体相似。)

It is not sufficient to simply stifle (抑制，克制住) a lustful desire for another's possessions and pretend it isn't there— as Roman Catholics believe. Rather, you have to stop those sinful desires from coming into your mind in the first place. You do this by filling your mind with good desires. It is not sufficient to stifle all desires altogether — as Buddhists believe. When desires are proper, they should be allowed, sometimes even encouraged. These good desires are from God. When you are sad, you cry. When you are hungry you want to eat. When you feel pain you moan (呻吟). Apostle Paul had a desire to die and go to heaven. There was nothing wrong with that desire. He kept working, but he wanted to go to heaven. So don't kill feelings altogether and become a monk.

4. God prescribes that you use your mouth to keep law 10. How?

a. Speak words that show your thankfulness for what you and others have received from you covenant God. This is insulation (绝缘，隔绝) against covetousness. When you are insulated against covetousness you will be safe from its consequences. Don't complain. Nothing good ever comes from God to you because of your complaining.

b. Rejoice when others prosper. This is most difficult. But you can learn it.
Romans 12:15 Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep.

5. Law 10 requires that you **make more effort for heavenly things than for earthly things.** The tendency is to overload yourself with worldly things and tasks that your life loses true meaning. But learn that truly good works follow you into heaven.

Revelation 14:13 Then I heard a voice from heaven saying to me, "Write: 'Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on.'" "Yes," says the Spirit, "that they may rest from their labors, and their works follow them."

What rewards will follow you in to heaven? Every obedience to the 10 laws goes with you! So do you have enough? Do you **share some of your possessions with your neighbor**? Do you hoard? Do **love God** in work and worship? Do you covet the time that God call you to worship on Sundays or do you covet the time when God calls you to do something for a total stranger?

Conclusion:

You can have good desires – physical desires for water, or emotional desires for companionship. You can also have spiritual desires. You desire God and to be in God's house. The 10th law deals with inordinate desires (过度无节制的欲望)...the desires for things which belong to someone else – that person's wealth, his wife, his position, his reputation, etc. God forbids all inordinate desires and threatens severe consequences – eternal death – to those who have them. Inordinate desires lead to other sins.

Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ: **Remind yourself of you eternal reward** in heaven. Moses wrote: *...the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision, saying, "Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield, your exceedingly great reward."* Do you see what effectively eliminates the need for coveting? You have a greater gift. **Furthermore, when you do good works**, like giving to the needy, you are adding to the treasures you will enjoy in heaven. Instant gratification is just that. Save up for what truly matters. And stay away from people who are enamored with stuff (沉迷于物质)! They will pull you down.

Finally, covetousness will destroy your soul faster than cancer or gangrene. 坏蛆. Ask God to change you. He will change you if you ask with a sincere heart. He will change you because Jesus suffered and took the punishment to satisfy God's anger. He will change you and make you his child. His salvation will then lead to your heart's satisfaction with better things...things that truly matter.