

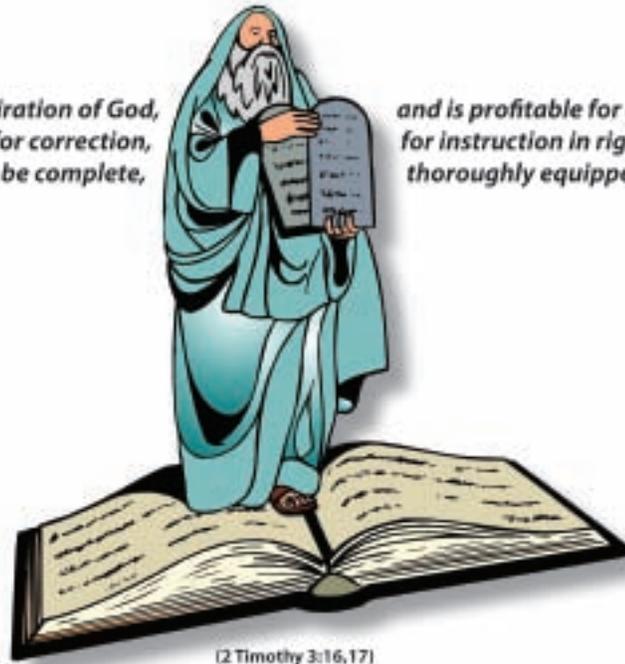
Teaching E-mails

Prophetic Warnings From a Righteous God

39. Do You Obey The Commandments Of God? (May 29, 2008)

*All Scripture is given by inspiration of God,
for reproof, for correction,
that the man of God may be complete,*

*and is profitable for doctrine,
for instruction in righteousness,
thoroughly equipped for every good work.*



(2 Timothy 3:16,17)



Restoration Ministries International

Mike & Sue Dowgiewicz

email: Mikedowg@aol.com

Web: www.Restorationministries.org

The Difference Between Committing A Sin and Sinning

In *Teaching E-mail 38* we addressed the need for a holy *fear of God*, a love-grounded fear that stirs you to live *according to His Word*. That's the pathway on which He empowers you to progressively grow in sanctification as you walk in His Spirit in obedient trust.

Your holy fear of the God you love and serve moves you to resist breaking His good, righteous laws. Our Father loves us so extravagantly that He has shown us the way of blessing through His commands and teaching as they are built upon by His Son.

Our holy and reverent fear of Who He is draws us *to Him in obedience*, not away from Him in shame! As Moses assured the people of Israel, ***“Do not be afraid. God has come to test you, so that the fear of God will be with you to keep you from sinning”*** (Exodus 20:20).

We want to emphasize that the fear of God is a good thing. Combined with our obedient trust and devotion to Lord Jesus, it keeps us from continuing in sin.

Did you ever consider the difference between *sinning* and *committing a sin*?

- **Sinning** is a habitual pattern of repeatedly violating God and His ways with no desire or intent to repent.
- **Committing a sin** is a singular act against God and His ways in which you gave in to temptation rather than resist it.

Both a *decision to sin* and a *lifestyle of sinning* grieve our God. That which is *not repented of* remains as guilt:

No one who has God as his Father keeps on sinning, because the seed planted by God remains in him. That is, he cannot continue sinning, because he has God as his Father (1 John 3:9).

Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us (Hebrews 12:1).

The writer to the Hebrews then goes on to tell us how to stop sinning: *“Let us fix our eyes on Jesus”* (v.2). It is *Jesus in us* Who enables us to *resist* the temptation to sin (see James 4:7; 1 Peter 5:9), and to *stop* walking in the darkness of habitual sin. As we shared in our previous Teaching E-mail:

- The Spirit of Jesus in His followers enables them to resist anything that's against God.
- Jesus alone is the true power against our dark, sinful desires.
- It is because of the Spirit of Jesus in His followers that we can *“take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ”* (2 Corinthians 10:5).

Even with the Spirit of Jesus in you, you may still give way to temptation and commit a sin. And, our merciful and loving Lord graciously provides the means of restoring the intimacy of fellowship with Him and with each other:

If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness (1 John 1:9).

Our Lord Jesus gloriously speaks to our Father in our defense when we turn from our sin and come before Him determined to walk in obedience to His commands (1 John 2:1-3).

BUT, if we refuse His offer to confess our sin so we can be forgiven and purified, there remain dire consequences:

For if we deliberately continue to sin after receiving the knowledge of the truth,

there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but only the terrifying prospect of Judgment, of raging fire that will consume the enemies of God (Hebrews 10:26,27).

Yet another grievous consequence is brought about by those who choose to abide in unrepentance:

A person in your faith community who keeps on sinning and/or refuses to repent of a sin is undermining your communal righteousness. An underlying premise of true fellowship is this: you're promising your brothers and sisters in your faith family that you'll do nothing to hinder their prayers from being answered.

Our Father commands us to *confess our sins to one another* and to *live uprightly* so that His ears will be open to our prayers (James 5:16; 1 Peter 3:12). That communal facet of our walk in Jesus is the *enactment* element of righteousness in which we are mutually accountable before Him. That's why Jesus made so clear the parameter of going to a brother who sins so that he might repent and be restored. [For more on this topic, use the Google search on our website and type in <communal righteousness>]

In *Teaching E-mail 37* we asked these questions. Here are some admittedly brief answers. You may come up with additional responses as you discuss them with your family and faith family.

- **Are there laws in the Older Testament that no longer apply to followers of Jesus? Which ones?**

Since Jesus became a "*Priest forever in the order of Melchizedek*" (Hebrews 5:6) the laws applying to the operation and administration of the Temple have been

fulfilled in Him and no longer apply to us as His Kingdom people. After His ascension our Lord made sure the Temple was destroyed because His followers had now become the *collective temple* for His Spirit (1 Corinthians 6:19).

However, the moral laws pertaining to righteous conduct still apply to us as followers of Jesus, since these are *the commands He taught as heart issues* to His disciples. We'll expand on this shortly.

- **In the teachings of Jesus, did He do away with all of the Older Testament laws, or did He strengthen and make full their meaning?**

Ever mindful of the good and righteous teaching presented in the Hebrew Scripture, our Lord Jesus strengthened and deepened the understanding of the laws and commandments.

For example, Deuteronomy 5:17 commands, "*You shall not murder.*"

Jesus commands:

"[W]hoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment. And whoever says to his brother, 'Raca!' shall be in danger of the council. But whoever says, 'You fool!' shall be in danger of hell fire" (Matthew 5:22). [This person has despised the insulted man in his heart. His words evidence this.]

Deuteronomy 5:18 commands, "*You shall not commit adultery.*"

Jesus commands:

"But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart" (Matthew 5:28).

Our Lord Jesus deepened the righteous teachings of the Hebrew text by focusing on the *heart motive* of the person rather than just on their acts. Many of the Pharisees and scribes presented

the *appearance* of obedience to the laws of God but their motive was not love—for either God or their fellow man!

Our Lord yearns for His followers to walk in obedient trust with circumcised hearts that love Him: *“The LORD your God will **circumcise your hearts and the hearts of your descendants, so that you may love Him with all your heart and with all your soul, and live**”* (Deuteronomy 30:6; see also Colossians 2:11).

- **If laws in the Older Testament are not repeated in the Newer Testament, does that mean they are no longer in effect?**

Man, not God, has divided the Bible into what most call the *Old* and *New Testaments*. But Paul sums up its continuity for all of us: *“All Scripture is God-breathed and is profitable for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work”* (2 Timothy 3:16,17).

The only Scripture to which Paul would be referring is the Hebrew Bible of His forefathers. Thus, the nature of God and the “profitable way” in which His people are to live is found in the Older Testament and made full in the teaching and commands of Jesus.

As one who walks in His Spirit, you’re assured that whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven (Matthew 16:19, 18:18). Through the lens of His Spirit He has given His own the authority and power to apply His commands to our lives. Many principles for this application are found in the Older Testament. For example:

- There is no “law” pertaining to TV viewing. But we do know from the Older Testament that there are *issues of righteousness* that we must consider if we’re

to make an application that’s acceptable to God (ie., Psalms 101:3;119:37).

- There are no laws about home schooling, Christian schooling or public education in the Bible. But there *are* commands in the Older Testament that pertain to raising “godly generations”. These need to be applied if you’re to get a clear picture of a parent’s responsibility (i.e., Deuteronomy 6:6-9).

“For if we would judge ourselves, we would not be judged”

(1 Corinthians 11:31).

In *Lifebyte 57. Kingdom Living (Part 7)*, we wrote:

The principle of obedience to God’s commands *because of your love relationship with Him* is foundational to Hebrew Scripture. For instance, the theme of love-grounded obedience in Joshua 22:5 is largely unknown as a way of fruitful life for much of western Christendom today.

But in the time of Jesus there was no doubt about the *interconnection* between love, obedience and holding fast to their God in willing service. That’s why Jesus could so readily inform His listeners that His “family members” were those who HEAR the word of God and DO IT (Luke 8:21).

In this light you’ll find that God’s moral laws still apply. As you read through Romans 2, for instance, there’s no doubt that what we *do* in our lives reflects whether we’ve walked the pathway of sin or of love-grounded obedient trust. Our *devotion to our Lord Jesus* is our heart motive to walk in His ways. This love differentiates us from those who perceive His commands as constraining rules and therefore pervert His grace into law-lessness.

How determinedly do you practice the interconnection between *love* and *responsive obedience* to God’s Word?

This is love for God: to obey His commands. And His commands are not burdensome (1 John 5:3).

Let's examine the first three of the Ten Commandments listed page 5. You'll notice that they're numbered differently according to the denominational frame of reference.

For the sake of our discussion we're going to use the Jewish delineation along with the biblical text for the commands. As you read through our discussion, please ask yourself what our God's commands mean to *you* and *your way of life*. Do you live in obedience to God's Word as His Spirit empowers you to do? Are your motives based on love for Him, or are you consumed with rule-keeping to try to gain His acceptance?

1. I am the LORD your God.

Why would God want His people, Israel, to have as their first commandment the understanding that He is "*your God*"? First, He wanted to personalize His relationship to them as *His chosen and treasured possession* (Deuteronomy 7:6). They were selected by grace for Himself as unique and set-apart.

Relational intimacy is a vital facet of our God's nature! He walked with Adam and Eve in the garden as a delighted Father with His children. And when He sent His Son to become man to redeem us, the angel ordered that His Name be *Immanuel*—God *with us* (Matthew 1:23, apperceiving Isaiah 7:14).

Intimate relationship is behind His command that you "*Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength*" (Deuteronomy 6:5; reaffirmed in Luke 10:27).

Next, the focus in this command is on God alone to help us understand His

command to *fear Him*. "God" is far more than a word. Our Lord Jesus made clear to His disciples that a holy fear of God underlies our relationship with Him as His Kingdom people:

I will show you Whom you should fear: Fear Him who, after the killing of the body, has power to throw you into hell. Yes, I tell you, fear Him (Luke 12:5).

Our gracious and righteous God is able to cast people into hell for eternity. Let this sink in, because the above words of Jesus are not empty. A righteous fear of God is part of our love relationship with Him! He *is* holy and His commands *are* holy, and by the gracious indwelling of His Spirit He lovingly enables us to incorporate obedience into our trust journey in Jesus. To willfully turn away from that intimacy and adopt a lifestyle of forsaking His ways will indeed incur His wrath: "*It is a dreadful thing to fall into the hands of the living God*" (Hebrews 10:31).

Notice from page 5 that Protestant denominations make the first commandment a *preface*. Especially during this past century, failure to focus on relationship with God as the *first and foremost foundational commandment* has opened the way to the unabashed lawlessness which now identifies much of western Protestantism. (Lawlessness is nothing new. Certain factions in the first century had perverted God's grace into *antinomianism*—a disregard for God's commands, teachings and laws.)

This omission has spawned the "Church Growth Movement" and "greasy grace" and every form of worldly compromise which passes for contemporary "worship". Each of these man-centered expressions nullifies the *holiness of God*. Rather, they attract by any means possible those who want to live

Division of the Ten Commandments by religion/denomination

<u>Commandment</u>	Jewish	Anglican, Reformed, and other Christian	Orthodox	Roman Catholic, Lutheran
I am the Lord your God	1	preface	1	1
You shall have no other gods before Me	2	1	2	
You shall not make for yourself an idol		2		
You shall not make wrongful use of the Name of your God	3	3	3	2
Remember the Sabbath to keep it holy	4	4	4	3
Honor your father and mother	5	5	5	4
You shall not murder	6	6	6	5
You shall not commit adultery	7	7	7	6
You shall not steal	8	8	8	7
You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor	9	9	9	8
You shall not covet your neighbor's wife	10	10	10	9
You shall not covet your neighbor's house or anything of his				10

Bible Text of the Ten Commandments

"I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. You shall have no other gods before Me. You shall not make for yourself an idol in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me, but showing love to a thousand [generations] of those who love me and keep my commandments. You shall not misuse the name of the LORD your God, for the LORD will not hold anyone guiltless who misuses his name. Observe the Sabbath day by keeping it holy, as the LORD your God has commanded you. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your manservant or maidservant, nor your ox, your donkey or any of your animals, nor the alien within your gates, so that your manservant and maid-

servant may rest, as you do.

Remember that you were slaves in Egypt and that the LORD your God brought you out of there with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm. Therefore the LORD your God has commanded you to observe the Sabbath day.

Honor your father and your mother, as the LORD your God has commanded you, so that you may live long and that it may go well with you in the land the LORD your God is giving you.

You shall not murder.

You shall not commit adultery.

You shall not steal.

You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor.

You shall not covet your neighbor's wife.

You shall not set your desire on your neighbor's house or land, his manservant or maidservant, his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor."

(Deuteronomy 5:6-21)

according to their sin nature rather than the holy and set-apart way of the Lord.

Roman Catholics and Lutherans combine the first two commandments into a single command. However, for many Catholics in particular, this lack of emphasis on God's awesome Sovereignty in relationship with His own has led to heresy: declaring as the "vicar of Christ on earth" a mere man who is as susceptible to his sin nature as anyone. From Catholic understanding, that which proceeds from the Pope is the word of God Himself, an infallible ruling. Both the position and the commands of the Pope elevate him to the role of "Christ in the flesh".

Contemporary Lutheran doctrine overlaps Catholic teaching on many points so there's no reason for them to re-arrange the numbering of their commandments. An analogy may help you understand any creedal difference between Lutherans and Catholics:

*If **true biblical reformation** could be described as traveling the 93 million miles from the earth to the sun, Lutherans only went as far as the nearest satellite. The furthest most Protestant denominations have gone is to the moon. They're still in orbit around the earth—and millions of miles from reaching the sun.*

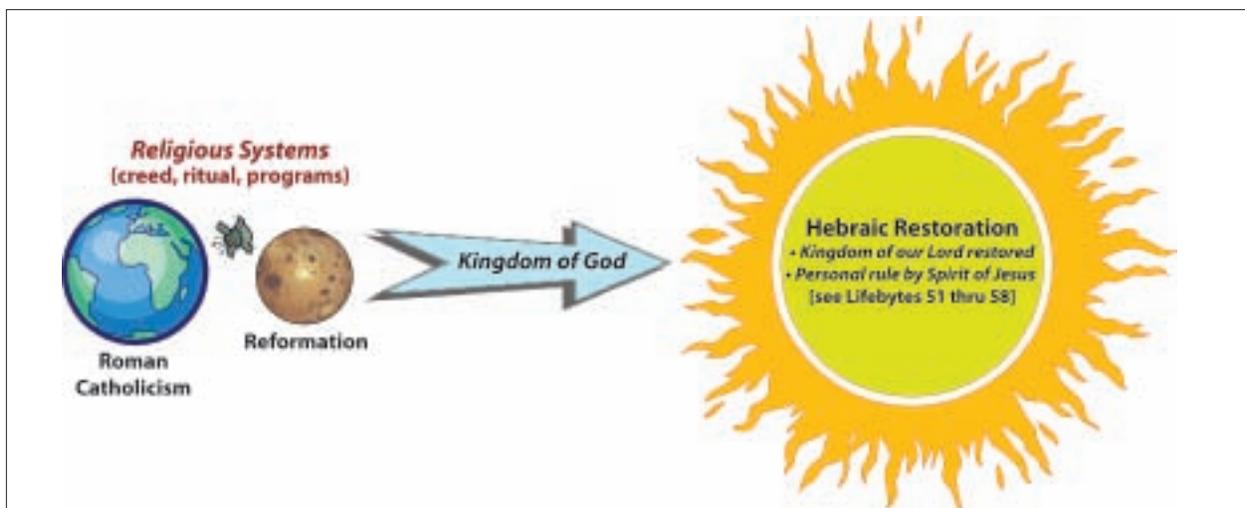
The King of the Kingdom is *not God* within religious systems in which

- clergy are intermediaries for others.
- "church" refers to an edifice rather than the called-out bride of Christ.
- those who claim to belong to Jesus are not indwelt by the Spirit of Jesus.
- those who consider themselves Christian neglect their purpose in His Kingdom (Ephesians 2:10).

These individuals have established *another god* — an idol of their own making who fits their parameters of a god they want to serve but disparages the God of the *entire Bible*. Religious ritual, programs and liturgy have replaced the relational intimacy of love-grounded obedient trust.

2. You shall have no other gods before Me; You shall not make for yourself an idol.

Once the first commandment has been diminished or de-emphasized, people follow the path of the Israelites. The very ones who had been chosen by grace to love and serve the Most High instead committed *spiritual adultery*. They lusted after other gods, stooping as low as to worship a calf's image or even to burn their children alive to the demon entity



Molech. (Think of today's "idols" of a worldview which excuses abortion, compromises with evil, and pursues unbiblical goals and values.)

In **Teaching E-mails 4 and 27** we quote Christian pollster George Barna:

There is no difference between "Christian" families and non-Christian homes... There are now over 20 million people in this nation who are actively seeking the restoration of the early Church.

Please re-read these Teaching E-mails for a fuller picture of the idolatry of American Christendom. We also encourage you to read Barna and Viola's latest book, "*Pagan Christianity?*" How grievous if you face our Lord at the Judgment Throne having lived in violation of the the first two commandments of our loving and faithful God.

3. You shall not make wrongful use of the Name of your God.

It tears our hearts apart to hear people using the precious Name of Jesus Christ as a filthy expletive. It's even more painful when you hear "church goers" profaning His Name. Are you careful to make sure no media enter your life or home in which His Name is blasphemed? His holiness is at stake by the way in which you revere His Name!

*Do not profane My holy name. I must be **acknowledged as holy** by the Israelites. **I am the LORD**, Who makes you holy (Leviticus 19:12; 22:32; see also Isaiah 57:15).*

Again, when the first commandment, which proclaims God *as God*, is neglected, even His Name is open to disrepute. Why? Because there is *no fear of Him*.

Concluding Thoughts

In this Teaching E-mail we've briefly addressed just the first three commandments because these three deal directly with our relationship with our God. For followers of Jesus, these underscore the foundational attitude we should have as a temple of the Spirit of Jesus within us.

God hasn't changed concerning the *love* and *fear* we need in our relationship with Him. The religious systems of both Roman Catholicism and much of denominational Protestantism are based on idolatrous practices adapted from the pagan Greeks and Romans.

God has become far removed from the individual believer. Many Catholics call upon Mary and the deceased saints to intercede on their behalf, an idolatry which is spiritual adultery. It is the indwelling Spirit of Christ alone Who makes intercession on our behalf:

*In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the **Spirit Himself intercedes** for us with groans that words cannot express. And He who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the **Spirit intercedes for the saints** in accordance with God's will (Romans 8:27,28).*

Much of Protestantism has also focused away from reliance on the indwelling Spirit of Christ alone. Pursuit of Bible *knowledge* without obedience to a beloved Lord can become idolatrous. Those who know the Word but don't live it through His power have not allowed God to be their God. Again, Barna's appraisal of American Christianity: ***There is no difference between "Christian" families and non-Christian homes.***

Before our next Teaching E-mail comes out we ask you to evaluate your

faith walk in light of the first three commandments. Ask the Spirit of Jesus to show you whether you're following God's criteria for these commandments with a heart that's devoted to our Lord and King. Be sure there isn't any vestige of idolatry in your faith practice!

If the practice of your faith is wrapped around traditions and rituals like those embedded within Catholicism or Protestantism which emphasize a God Who is "out there", please reconsider before Him and His Word. He hasn't called for you to be a 'churched' person, but a full-fledged beloved servant of the King in His Kingdom.