

Instruction In The Westminster Standards

The Historic Standards of Presbyterian Denominations

STUDIES IN THE WESTMINSTER SHORTER CATECHISM

Q. 81. What is forbidden in the tenth commandment?

A. The tenth commandment forbiddeth all discontentment with our own estate, envying or grieving at the good of our neighbor, and all inordinate motions and affections to anything that is his.

Scripture References: I Cor. 10:10. Gal. 5:26. Col. 3:5.

Questions:

1. How do we show lack of contentment with our own estate?
We show lack of contentment with our own estate by not being pleased with the place and possessions the Lord has given us; by complaining against the Lord because of our state; by thinking we are due far more than the Lord has given us.
2. What is envy?
It is the desire to have the better circumstances of our neighbor or any of his superior privileges. It is the desire to have what God does not want us to have, whether it be in the physical, mental or material realm.
3. Why should we refrain from envy?
We should refrain from envy because it is a sin before God. It is a sin that has a great affect on us and is the foundation of many evil deeds. (James 3:16)
4. What is meant in this commandment by the term "inordinate motions and affections?" These are the unlawful purposes, intentions and desires that arise in the heart. It is especially concerned here with these unlawful acts as they pertain to our neighbor.
5. Where are these "inordinate motions and affections" found in man?
These arise from the soul, these are the first stirrings of corruption which lead us on to the consent of the will.
6. What should this teach us as believers in Jesus Christ?
This should teach us that it is only by His grace we are saved and only by His grace that we are able to stand against the evil that rises from within us. We should ever be careful to keep ourselves in that relationship with Him that will lead us in the ways of righteousness.

BE DILIGENT IN MORTIFICATION

The believer is forbidden in this commandment to envy, to passionate desires of anything belonging to his neighbor. This is a high standard to keep and one that is difficult to keep. It is especially difficult when living in a world where the exact opposite is the standard of living. The believer must work at being different in this area.

The matter of wrong desires is made very clear by Paul in Colossians 3:5. He begins the verse by saying, "Mortify!" He is telling the believer that he must put to death — or make dead — these wrong desires that arise in regard to his neighbor or in regard to anything else. And here is where the believer falls short, he simply goes the way of slackness, he shows a lack of diligence. Possibly a clearer way of putting it is to say he is lazy, spiritually lazy.

There is no easy way to keep the commandments of God. Simply to say, "I am saved" and counting on that to enable you to work at pleasing Him will not be enough. It is so very strange that we do not see this. We know full well that in the life of the world we dare not be lazy if we want to have success. Whether it be in business, or in an athletic contest, or in being known as a good homemaker we know it takes hard work. Why then should we think that being a success in the eyes of the Lord will come without diligence? The hymn writer had learned the lesson when he wrote:

"Must I be carried to the skies
On flowery beds of ease,
While others fought to win the prize
And sailed through bloody seas?"

The commandments are not kept through a lack of diligence. The believer must be certain that he disciplines his life moment by moment or else he will find himself discontent with his own estate and will be turned to the way of envy and wrong desire concerning the things of his neighbor. The way is hard but it is possible as He is given the pre-eminence in our lives. We are so prone to sin in these areas unless we stay very close to the Word of God.

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