

Loving Life: The Sixth Commandment

I Peter 3:8-15

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8. Finally, be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another, love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous:
9. Not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing: but contrariwise blessing; knowing that ye are thereunto called, that ye should inherit a blessing.
10. For he that will love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile:
11. Let him eschew evil, and do good; let him seek peace, and ensue it.
12. For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers: but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil.
13. And who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good?
14. But and if ye suffer for righteousness' sake, happy are ye: and be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled;

Heidelberg Catechism

Q105: What does God require in the sixth Commandment?

A105: That I do not revile, hate, insult or kill my neighbor either in thought, word or gesture, much less in deed, whether by myself or by another, but lay aside all desire of revenge; moreover, that I do not harm myself, nor wilfully run into any danger. Wherefore also to restrain murder the magistrate is armed with the sword.

Q106: Does this Commandment speak only of killing?

A106: No, but in forbidding murder God teaches us that He abhors its very root, namely, envy, hatred, anger, and desire of revenge; and that in His sight all these are hidden murder.

Q107: But is this all that is required: that we do not kill our neighbor?

A107: No, for in condemning envy, hatred, and anger, God requires us to love our neighbor as ourselves, to show patience, peace, meekness, mercy, and kindness towards him, and to prevent his hurt as much as possible; also, to do good even unto our enemies.

There are several things that we can say about the passage in I Peter 3 that we read a moment ago. But before we do, I want to say something about the way we are to interpret the law of God. Paul says that the law is spiritual. That is, it goes to the inner man, and not just to the body. We have not kept the 6th commandment simply because we have refrained from shedding blood. No, the commandment also forbids me from even

harboring in my heart anything that is against my neighbor's life. As question 106 of the catechism says:

Q106: Does this Commandment speak only of killing?

A106: No, but in forbidding murder God teaches us that He abhors its very root, namely, envy, hatred, anger, and desire of revenge; and that in His sight all these are hidden murder.

Because of this, the passage in I Peter 3, which speaks of loving life, might be considered a commentary on the Sixth Commandment—what does it mean to love my neighbor's life? With this consideration in mind, let us look at the passage before us.

I. Verses 8,9. We are called to blessing and not to evil. We are not called to wither the life of others, but to encourage them to grow and prosper. Everything that is against the life of my neighbor is forbidden of me. What are these withering things that make it difficult for my neighbor's life: "be pitiful, courteous, not rendering evil for evil; not railing for railing.

a. Pitiful: Merciful Tenderhearted, and not cruel. It is not weak to be kind and compassionate.

b. Courteous: this means to be friendly. Jesus said we are even to salute our enemies—give them common courtesy. To cut, to snub, to refuse to speak, is contrary to the Sixth Commandment, for how can I snub someone if I love his life?

c. Not seeking revenge, even in word.

d. We are called to inherit blessing. Let us live as if we are going to heaven, and not to hell. Do you think that you can teach people to go to heaven by making their lives hell?

II. Verse ten quotes Psalm 34: "What man is he that desireth life, and loveth many days, that he may see good?" Ps. 34:12 What is the fundamental principle of life: you reap what you sow, and you get back what you give. By what measure you measure, it will be measured to you again. If you sow evil speaking, pride, self-will, and strife, then that is what you will get. If you are filled with strife, you will attract around you people who love strife. If you are filled with anger and revenge, you will attract people who are filled with anger and revenge. Eventually, these things will come down upon your own head.

a. It is especially important to restrain the tongue. Much murder is done with the tongue. That's why James says: "But the tongue can no man tame; it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison. Therewith bless we God, even the Father; and therewith curse we men, which are made after the similitude of God." The tongue is set on fire of hell, and does all sorts of evil. Many a man's spiritual life has been withered at the root, because of the evil things that others have said. People have been happy in church, growing in the Lord, filled with good fruits and joy--- and have been blasted in their spiritual life because of slander, hate, and evil speaking.

b. If you love you neighbor you will not blast him with your tongue. We are all prone to this, but if a person can control his tongue, James says that he is a perfect man.

c. Because of this, we are to seek after peace and blessing. Vs. 11.

III. Vs. 12,13. How do you strive to get what you want? This is the key question. How do you expect to get what you want?

a. If you expect to get what you want from men, then you are going to be frustrated, because there will always be someone in the way of what you want. The natural thing, in this case, is to seek to destroy in some way the people that are in the way. You can destroy them with words, with slander. The business world is filled with this. So is politics. Use negative ads—it doesn't matter if they are true or not, they will be effective in destroying your opponent so that you can get what you want. Slash and burn.

b. Vs. 12. This is the principle that God's people are to live by. God will not withhold from you anything that is good. You must seek it from Him. God is open to your cry, you do not need to slash and burn. David understood this very well. Twice, Saul was in his hands and David could have murdered him, but he refused to do it, because he trusted in the Lord.

c. Who can harm you if God is determined to give you a blessing, and has called to you blessing. Why spend you lives in bitterness and strife, argumentation and hatred. Where does your blessing come from? If it comes from heaven, then why do you act as though it comes from the earth? If it comes from God, why do you get so angry with men, as if they could give you what you want?

IV. Vs. 14. But what if men do me wrong, even when I do right? What if I do good, and still don't get what I want? This is where trust comes in. God has promised you a blessing, but it might be of a different sort than you lust after.

a. One kind of blessing that he gives is to cause us to suffer for righteousness sake. Jesus put it this way.

10. Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

11. Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake.

12. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.

b. You see, it goes to your value system. It is true, that if you value earthly things more than heavenly things, your life will be filled with strife and bitterness, for there will always be someone in your way, frustrating you, and taking your toys. But if your treasure is in heaven, then no one can take it from you. If your hope is in God, then nothing on this earth can frustrate you.

c. You see, it always comes back to God and to spiritual things. Our life comes from God, and its health and sustenance comes from God. That why we are called to pray, "Give us this day our daily bread"---our life is from God.

d. Don't be troubled. Don't be afraid of their terror. Let the peace of God rule your hearts and mind, for trust and peace go together. It is only when we do not trust the Lord that fear fills our hearts and minds. When fear fills our hearts and minds, then evil imaginations come, and we fancy this evil coming upon us and that evil. We imagine evil against the people who we suspect will bring the evil things, and before long we are saying and hateful and awful things.

V. Vs. 15 Sanctify God in your hearts.

a. Separate God in your minds from everything profane and worldly. God is not like men. Men cannot thwart the purposes of God, nor deprive you of His blessing. What? Do men have more power than God? Are they wiser than He? Can they do us evil, when God has purposed to do us good. Can they curse that which God has blessed?

b. We fear men and hate men, because we esteem them more than God. Face it, that is the reason. Trusting in the Lord will cure us of the fear of men, which leads us to hatred for men.

c. In your hearts—that means, sincerely and truly, Not just in pretense before men.

VI. Vs. 15. Be ready to give an answer for the hope. Why do you live the way you do, Christian? Can you defend hateful speech, the desire for revenge, hatred of your neighbor? Apologetics is not ultimately an intellectual exercise, but a faithful defense of the way you live. If you cannot defend the way you live, then you should change the way you live.

The world desperately needs hope today. There needs to be a renewal of hope and confidence in Jesus Christ. Of course if you have no hope, you cannot explain to anyone why you have it. If you cannot convince yourself, you will never be able to convince anyone else. As long as you expect to receive your blessings from men and the earth, you will not have any true hope, for that can come only from God and His promises.

May God bless you.