



Commandments 6, 7 and 8

Romans 13:8–14

Sermon for March 13 2022

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Introduction

Today we are looking at Question 11 from the New City Catechism.

I will read the question, and then let's read the answer together.

Question 11: What does God require in the sixth, seventh, and eighth commandments?

Sixth, that we do not hurt, or hate, or be hostile to our neighbor, but be patient and peaceful, pursuing even our enemies with love.

Seventh, that we abstain from sexual immorality and live purely and faithfully, whether in marriage or in single life, avoiding all impure actions, looks, words, thoughts, or desires, and whatever might lead to them.

Eighth, that we do not take without permission that which belongs to someone else, nor withhold any good from someone we might benefit.

Let's look at today's scripture reading. Hear now the Word of the Lord.

Romans 13:8–14

8 Owe nothing to anyone—except for your obligation to love one another. If you love your neighbor, you will fulfill the requirements of God's law.

9 For the commandments say, "You must not commit adultery. You must not murder. You must not steal. You must not covet." These—and other such commandments—are summed up in this one commandment: "Love your neighbor as yourself."

10 Love does no wrong to others, so love fulfills the requirements of God's law.

11 This is all the more urgent, for you know how late it is; time is running out. Wake up, for our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed.

12 The night is almost gone; the day of salvation will soon be here. So remove your dark deeds like dirty clothes, and put on the shining armor of right living.

13 Because we belong to the day, we must live decent lives for all to see. Don't participate in the darkness of wild parties and drunkenness, or in sexual promiscuity and immoral living, or in quarreling and jealousy.

14 Instead, clothe yourself with the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ. And don't let yourself think about ways to indulge your evil desires.

Together we read Isaiah 40:8:

"The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God will stand forever."

Let's pray together.

Father, please send the Holy Spirit to give me wisdom and truth as I preach. Please open our hearts and minds to your truth, so we can glorify you in everything we do. We ask this in the name of Jesus our Lord. Amen.

Point 1. Love your neighbor as yourself (verses 8-10)

Point 2. God's Commands include "don't do that" and "do this" (verses 12-14)

Point 1. Love your neighbor as yourself (verses 8-10)

The 10 Commandments seem very simple when you read them. And they are simple. Today's question from the New City Catechism is about Commandments 6, 7, and 8. They say: "Do not murder, Do not commit adultery, Do not steal." Are those

statements confusing? Not really. But I want to propose two things to you today. First, God has made those statements even more clear, and easier to understand. Second, God has also made those statements much deeper and wider than they first appear.

Let's look more closely at Romans 13:8-10. First at verse 8:

"8 Owe nothing to anyone—except for your obligation to love one another. If you love your neighbor, you will fulfill the requirements of God's law."

Love your neighbor, and you will fulfill God's law. That is clear enough for a child to understand. But it is also complicated enough to lead to many more questions. Questions like, "who is my neighbor?" You might remember when an expert in God's law asked Jesus that question. That's when Jesus told the story of the Good Samaritan as his answer. According to Jesus, our neighbor is any needy person that God puts in our path. Our neighbor is the person with a need that God brings to our attention. That helps us with verse 8, by telling us who we are to love. Now we have to ask, "what does love for my neighbor look like? What does it mean to love that person?" To answer that question, let's look again at Romans 13:9-10.

"9 For the commandments say, "You must not commit adultery. You must not murder. You must not steal You must not covet."

These—and other such commandments—are summed up in this one commandment: "Love your neighbor as yourself."

10 Love does no wrong to others, so love fulfills the requirements of God's law."

Paul is saying that "love your neighbor as yourself" is a simple summary of commandments 7, 6, 8, and 10. I think that makes a lot of sense. If you love your neighbor as you love yourself, you will respect your neighbor's property. You won't steal from him, because you understand that he is entitled to his own belongings.

There is also a deeper truth here. The essence of what God is saying to us through Paul is that our actions begin in our hearts. Sometimes when we do something wrong we say, "I don't know why I did that!" However, we don't actually do things for no reason. Everything we do and don't do come from our hearts. Jesus said it this way in Matthew 12:35.

"35 A good person produces good things from the treasury of a good heart, and an evil person produces evil things from the treasury of an evil heart."

Why are Russian soldiers invading Ukraine right now? How did this evil war begin? Let's think about this together. To fight a war, you must train the bodies, minds, and hearts of your soldiers. Soldiers need bodies that are physically strong, so they can run and jump and fight. Soldiers need minds that understand how to read a map, use their equipment, and make decisions on the battlefield. Soldiers also need hearts that are motivated to kill other human beings.

In World War 2, Jewish people in Germany were persecuted and killed by their own friends and neighbors. To cause such evil actions, Adolf Hitler convinced the German people that Jews were their enemies. You see, before you can kill someone, you must have a reason to fear and hate them.

That's why in war the enemy is always given derogatory names. American soldiers called Germans "krauts." They called Iraqis "ragheads" and called Asians "gooks" or "slant eye."

During the genocide in Rwanda, people called each other "cockroaches," "rats," or "snakes." Those names have a purpose. Because God's law is written on our hearts. Even atheists have "do not murder" written on their hearts. We all know it is wrong to take a human life. If you want to motivate one group to kill another group, you first must dehumanize them. It's natural to kill cockroaches, so calling people that makes it easier for your soldiers to kill them. That's why Putin described the Ukrainian government as a "gang of drug addicts and neo-Nazis." Putin's choice of language was designed to prepare the hearts of Russian soldiers to kill Ukrainians. Putin wants his soldiers to believe the Ukrainians are the enemy of Russia. Putin says that killing Ukrainians is not murder, it is self-defense.

Listen to verse 10 again.

"10 Love does no wrong to others, so love fulfills the requirements of God's law."

This is the point Paul is making here: if you truly love your neighbor, you won't murder him. You won't invade a neighboring country for no good reason. Because love does no wrong to others. But when there is anger, lust, or greed in our hearts it can lead us to murder, adultery, or theft.

Do you ever wonder why there is so much evil in the world today? Murder, adultery, and theft happen because of the anger, lust, and greed in the hearts of people like you and me. Evil exists because we love ourselves more than we love our neighbors. It is that simple. Sin is the result of excessive self-love. Sin says to my neighbor, "I want what you have, so I'm going to take it from you." And sin says to God, "I want to do whatever I want, so I will ignore your laws if they get in my way."

Love for God and love for neighbor are the solution to sin and evil. But to love well, we first must receive God's love for us. Did you know that it wasn't the nails that held Jesus on the cross? Jesus had the power to get off the cross if he wanted. But Jesus loved his neighbor (you), more than he loved his own life.

It was Christ's love for us that held him on the cross. It wasn't the nails. There are many important theological dimensions to the death and resurrection of our Savior. But there is also one very simple message communicated by the cross: God loves you. Our sin makes us enemies of God. But God loves you so much that he didn't want to spend eternity without you. So in love, God the Father sent God the Son to die. And in love Jesus rose from the grave, to give us new life. And now you can live a life

of love, by the power of the Holy Spirit inside of you.

Christ's love for you gives you the power to love your neighbor as yourself. That is a "kingdom value." We begin to know and practice kingdom values when God sends the Holy Spirit to help us "wake up" as verse 11 says. Are you awake, made alive with Christ and filled by the Holy Spirit? I hope so, my friends. Until you are, you cannot understand how to live in the Kingdom of God. Let's look now at:

Point 2. God's Commands include "don't do that" and "do this"

Look with me again at Romans 13:12-14. In these verses God tells us what we must not do, and also what we must do.

"12 The night is almost gone; the day of salvation will soon be here. So remove your dark deeds like dirty clothes, and put on the shining armor of right living.

13 Because we belong to the day, we must live decent lives for all to see. Don't participate in the darkness of wild parties and drunkenness, or in sexual promiscuity and immoral living, or in quarreling and jealousy.

14 Instead, clothe yourself with the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ. And don't let yourself think about ways to indulge your evil desires."

There are a lot of ways that we can sin by hurting other people. It might be tempting to think that the way to avoid sin is to avoid people. You could be like this guy, alone on an island, far away from anyone. Do you think it is difficult for him to obey the command, "you must not murder"? Of course not. There is no one on the island he can murder. But what about God's command to love our neighbor? If I am alone an island far away from other people, then I can't be a blessing to anyone. I can't love my neighbor if I choose not to have neighbors!

It is not enough to "remove your dark deeds like dirty clothes" as verse 12b says. We must also "put on the shining armor of right living." Douglas Moo says it this way: "Mere outward conformity to commandments is not what God wants. God wants sincere love: an honest, consistent concern for other people that spills over into actions of all kinds."

Obedience motivated by fear focuses on avoiding sin, because "you must not steal." But obedience motivated by love focuses on doing good. Love says "I will not steal from my neighbor. And because I want my neighbor to be happy and safe, I will give him what he needs. I will try to find ways to bless him and be generous."

My friends, God's perfect law demands perfect obedience. But none of us can obey perfectly. That's why salvation can come only by grace. One of the best definitions of grace in the Bible is found in Ephesians 2:4-5.

"4 But God is so rich in mercy, and he loved us so much,

5 that even though we were dead because of our sins, he gave us life when he raised Christ from the dead. It is only by God's grace that you have been saved!"

Ephesians 2:4 says that God loved you so much, and is so rich in mercy, that he acted in a radical way to save us. The Father's heart of mercy moved Him to send His Son to earth to live a perfect life and die a sacrificial death. Because that was the only way that people like us, dead in our sins, could be saved and resurrected spiritually. The same power that raised Jesus from the dead was also used by God to raise you from spiritual death when you trusted in Jesus.

Here is a good definition of the word grace: "Grace is God's unmerited favor on people. Grace cannot be earned, or deserved, or repaid." Grace can convert sinners into saints. Grace can change evil into good. I want to introduce you to a new word: gracism. I don't know if it translated properly in the translation software, because it is a word that was invented by Dr. David Anderson. He is the pastor of Bridgeway Community Church in Maryland, a multi-cultural church like One Voice Fellowship. Dr. Anderson wrote this great book called GRACISM. "Gracism" is the combination of two other words: grace and racism.

Racism is "to speak, act, or think negatively about someone because of their color, class, or culture." Racism actively insults or hurts another person because of their skin color or culture. Gracism does the opposite. Gracism actively helps someone who is different. Because God's law tells us: "don't do this," and also tells us: "do this."

Dr. Anderson says, "Gracism reaches across ethnic lines and racial borders to lend assistance and 'extra grace' to those who are different, on the fringe, or marginalized. This person or group can be of any color, culture, or gender." There are seven positive commitments of gracism, according to Dr. Anderson:

1. I will lift you up.
2. I will cover you.
3. I will share with you.
4. I will honor you.
5. I will stand with you.
6. I will consider you.
7. I will celebrate you.

My friends, those seven things are a great summary of what it means to love your neighbor as yourself. But we cannot do these things on our own. We need God's help to do what God requires. That's why verses 13 and 14 say this:

"13 Don't participate in the darkness of wild parties and drunkenness, or in sexual promiscuity and immoral living, or in quarreling and jealousy.

14 Instead, clothe yourself with the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ."

My friends, I have been guilty of all those things in verse 13. However, I have been forgiven and resurrected spiritually by God's mercy and grace.

Now that I am a follower of Jesus, I cannot return to the behavior described in verse 13. As a Christian I carry the name of Christ. My behavior brings glory or shame to the name of Christ. There are negative behaviors I must put off, and also positive behaviors I must put on.

That is why verse 14 urges us to "clothe yourself with the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ." That's why we pray, and meditate on scripture, and memorize God's word. To end our sermon, I want to share again the verses that we heard earlier in the service. Listen for how Paul names negative behaviors we must stop doing, and positive behaviors we should do.

1 Corinthians 13:4-7

"4 Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant

5 or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful;

6 it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth.


7 Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things."

I memorized these verses during my first year of marriage to Naomi. Because marriage is too hard to do in my own strength. I realized that I needed to "clothe myself with the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ." I needed the help of God to put off sinful behaviors, and to put on the love that my wife and children deserve.

How will you clothe yourself with the presence of Christ this week? I hope you will make a plan to do that. Because we all need God's help to do what God requires. Can we pray together now, and ask the Holy Spirit to bless us with the presence and help of the Lord Jesus Christ?

Let's pray. Father in heaven, we want to honor you with our lives, but our hearts are often filled with anger, lust, and greed. We hurt and neglect the people around us, because we love ourselves so much. We love our own comfort and safety and pleasure more than we love our neighbors. Jesus, your love is so different than that. You left the comfort and safety of heaven to come to earth. You came here to save your enemies, when we were dead in our sins. Thank you for your proactive mercy and grace.

Help us put on the presence of Christ. Help us love others as you loved us, so people will know and trust in you. We pray all this in the name of Jesus. Amen.

 One Voice Fellowship