

# Light On Our Path



*Messages by Pastors P. Aasman, C. Bosch & D. Vandeburgt  
**a series on the Law of God**  
at the Streetlight Mission Church in various P.M. services  
from September 2008 to January 2009*

## Table of Contents

Text	Title	Author	Page #
Introduction	<b><i>The Law of Our Gracious God</i></b>	C. Bosch	4
1 <sup>st</sup> Commandment	<b><i>No Other gods</i></b>	P. Aasman	11
2 <sup>nd</sup> Commandment	<b><i>No Images</i></b>	P. Aasman	14
3 <sup>rd</sup> Commandment	<b><i>The Lord's Name</i></b>	D. Vandeburgt	18
4 <sup>th</sup> Commandment	<b><i>Observe the Sabbath Day</i></b>	P. Aasman	23
5 <sup>th</sup> Commandment	<b><i>Honour your Father and Mother</i></b>	P. Aasman	26
6 <sup>th</sup> Commandment	<b><i>You shall not Murder</i></b>	P. Aasman	29
7 <sup>th</sup> Commandment	<b><i>You shall not Commit Adultery</i></b>	P. Aasman	33
8 <sup>th</sup> Commandment	<b><i>You shall not Steal</i></b>	P. Aasman	37
9 <sup>th</sup> Commandment	<b><i>You shall not give False Testimony</i></b>	C. Bosch	40
10 <sup>th</sup> Commandment	<b><i>You shall not Covet</i></b>	P. Aasman	47

September 7, 2008

*Pastor Chris Bosch*

### ***The Law of Our Gracious God***

Reading: Exodus 19:16 – 20:2; Colossians 1:15 – 20

For a number of weeks in our Sunday evening services, we have busied ourselves with the Twelve Articles of our Christian Faith, otherwise known as The Apostles' Creed. Last week the Pastor spoke to us about the last article, "I believe in life everlasting."

But now the question is "how should we live?" If Jesus Christ has died for sinners like you and me, how are we to show our thankfulness to Him?

The Lord does not leave us guessing. He has given us the Ten Words of His Covenant, His holy Law. He gave that Law long, long ago, for more than one reason. First of all, that it might discover our sins. For where there is no law, there is no knowledge of wrongdoing. If there is no law against stealing, lying, or murdering someone, you can't be accused of doing wrong if you were to do these things. Romans 3:20 says that, through God's law we "become conscious of sin." Every time we hear God's law we have to admit that "I, too, have sinned in many ways and I fall far short of the love and honor and obedience God expects of me."

But then, if we cry out to the Lord in true repentance and seek forgiveness in Jesus Christ, we may also know this - with his blood, he, Jesus Christ, forgives me and washes me clean from all my sins.

But that doesn't mean that we can forget about God's law. We may not say, "Jesus Christ was perfectly obedient, and I believe in him so now I can do whatever I want." That would be a horrible thing to say.

When the Bible speaks of "God's Law," we are tempted to think of a whole bunch of harsh, cold rules and regulations. You might just think, "Oh, that's about having to do this and that, and not doing such and such." Or, "As if we didn't have enough rules and regulations already!"

Yet that would be a completely wrong way of thinking about God's holy law. Actually, when God gave His ten commandments he didn't even mention the word "law" or "commandments." It simply says, "*And God spoke these words.*" (Exodus 20: 1)

Now you might say, "Sure, that's what it says, yet what follows are the Ten Commandments." That's true and yet, we must not forget that when God speaks, he speaks words of life! When he created heaven and earth and all things in them, he spoke and there was light and life all over the place. Elsewhere in the Bible we read that when God speaks, his word is *a life-giving*

*word.* It causes rains to come and water the earth making plants to bud and bloom so that "*all the trees of the field will clap their hands.*" (Isa. 55: 12)

So this evening we want to consider the introduction to the Law of God. We hear that it is a *law of life, of liberty and of love.* You hear that God's Word is a word of life in these words: "*I am the Lord your God who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery.*" With them, the Lord didn't only remind his people that they had been slaves in Egypt, suffering severe punishment at the hand of cruel slave drivers. That was a terrible thing and the Jews cried out, loud and long.

What was even worse is that *in Egypt, they were not free to worship the Lord according to his word!* Everywhere people worshipped dead idols: Re or Atum, the sun-god, Nut the sky goddess, and Shu and Geb, and Nu, the gods of air, earth and the waters under the earth, as well as Osiris, the ruler of the world of the dead. In time, God's people had begun to worship those idols, too!

But then the Lord heard their cries and he set out to rescue them. He sent Moses and Aaron his brother to say to Pharaoh, the king, "Thus says the Lord, 'Let my people go!'" Pharaoh stubbornly refused but then God sent ten horrible plagues and that did it. Pharaoh let the people go and God set them on the road to

the promised land, for he is the Lord of life. At Mt. Sinai, he wrote down his law for them on two tablets of stone.

In doing so, he kept and maintained his *covenant, his word of promise and of obligation*. Even as the people stood at the foot of the mountain, God said to them, *“You have seen what I did to the Egyptians and how I carried you on eagles’ wings and brought you to myself. Now therefore if you obey my voice and keep my covenant you shall be my own possession.”*

Then, forty years later, when they were finally ready to go in to possess the land, God repeated his words of life: *“And you shall again obey the voice of the Lord and keep all his commandments. The Lord will make you abundantly prosperous in all the world of your hands, in the fruit of your body and in the fruit of your cattle...”*

This great God who rides beyond the clouds and has the whole world in his hands, is a gracious God, a God of life. That is especially so as we remember that in no way could God’s people obey and so fulfill God’s commandments. For he is a holy God and requires full obedience, but all people are sinful, right from the womb of our mother.

Yet God’s law is a perfect whole said the psalmist (Ps. 19). It is like a beautiful vase - if that vase should have a crack in it the whole thing is ruined. So if you and I break one of God’s commandments, we break the whole law.

Yet, what did God do? He sent his one and Only Son, Jesus Christ. He was completely obedient to his Father in heaven. And he came to give his true children life, even abundant, everlasting life - by dying on Calvary’s cross for our sins.

In him, by faith, we have new life. Led by the Holy Spirit, through the Word we can live to His praise - if we believe in Him. Do we sometimes, even often fail him and grieve him with our sins? As often as we repent and ask for forgiveness he lifts us up again and says, “Now walk before me and be obedient. Remember that I am the Lord and Giver of Life. Here are the ten words of my covenant. Treasure them. Shun all idolatry. Don’t become a slave of sex, or of drugs and of alcohol.” Remember this: “I set you free from the curse of sin. I liberated you. So my Word, my Law is a law of liberty. Yes of true liberty, for *‘I brought you out of the land of Egypt, the house of bondage.’*”

But now I hear someone saying? “Out of Egypt? That may have been true for those Jews so long ago, but I was never there. I’ve only been over the Skyway bridge once or twice in my life, never mind Egypt!”

But yes, we’ve all been there. For just as God’s people were slaves in Egypt, we of ourselves, in our old human nature, are slaves of sin today. That’s why for example, we sing Psalm 51, “Create in me a clean heart O God.”

Yes, we too can be slaves in our Egypt of sin. Just think of how swearing, stealing, cursing, and living a godless life can bring you down. You can become a slave of alcohol and drugs. You can become addicted to pride and jealousy. Instead of serving the one true God you can make things, creatures, money and sex your idols, and in the process you grieve the Lord who once made people right and holy and sincere.

But the Lord, Yahweh, the One true God says, “in Jesus Christ I can set you free from all this sin and misery and suffering and shame. Only, **believe** in me. Learn to love me and to serve me only. *Here is my Law.* It is not a horrible burden, but it is a law of *true liberty*, of living a life of thankfulness in serving the Lord - a law of thankfulness and of obedience to your God and Saviour. Yes, to your Saviour who died for you and who lives for you today.”

Then it is not difficult to see God’s law is also a law of love. You hear it in what has been called the “summary of the law” - “*Love the Lord your God with all your heart and soul and mind, and love your neighbour as yourself.*”

Yet *in the first place* it is not a law of love because of this command of God that we love him sincerely. From beginning to end it is a law of love because it was received from the hand of God Himself. This God told Moses in Deut. 10:15 that “*He had set his heart in love upon his fathers.*” He had adopted Israel to be

his people, so he gave them his Law that they might know him as the God who loved them and cared for them, and wanted the best for them. Had he not promised to send his Son to die for them?

True, that obliged them to love him in return and to love their neighbour as themselves. Yet our love for each other and for neighbours is driven by the love of God. Elsewhere the Bible says, “*We love because he (Jesus Christ) first loved us.*” (1 John 4:14) The Law of God is really the broadcast of God’s love. Must we worship no other God than him (1st commandment)? Are we called to obey those in authority over us (4th commandment)? Are we to speak the truth and to be faithful in marriage? We must do so in love of Jesus Christ who, as we read is “*before all things and in Him all things hold together. And he is the head of the body, the church... so that in everything he might have the supremacy.*”

That means that in everything he is and wants to be number 1! Then we must give Jesus Christ all the honor and love he has coming. “*For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life*” (John 3:16).

Let us then learn to say and pray, “O how I love your Law, it is my meditation night and day. Teach it to me, that I might learn more of your love and grace and justice. For you are the one who brought me out of my land of Egypt, my house of bondage.”

The precepts of the Lord are right, giving joy to the heart.  
The commands of the Lord are radiant, giving light to the eyes.  
The fear of the Lord is pure, enduring forever.

September 14, 2008  
*Pastor Paul Aasman*

**Deuteronomy 5:7** “You shall have no other gods before me.”

*1<sup>st</sup> Word: No Other gods*

Reading: Jeremiah 2:1-19

The worst thing that could ever happen to you is that you should be found to be worthless by God. John the Baptist warns that the worthless chaff will be thrown in the fire.

The people of Israel, Jeremiah complains in verse 5, had followed worthless idols, and had themselves become worthless. God says it again in verse 11: “*my people have exchanged their Glory for worthless idols.*” It was appalling! What horror!

God continues in verse 13, “*My people have committed two sins: They have forsaken me, the spring of living water, and have dug their own cisterns, broken cisterns that cannot hold water.*”

Jeremiah compares a spring to a cistern. A spring of living, that is, running water, is the image of purity, refreshment and beauty – a spring is nearly always pure and clean; it is usually cool,

even cold, coming as it does from deep under ground and it is usually beautiful because trees, grass and flowers thrive around springs. But a cistern is yucky. In Jerusalem, there were great, big cisterns carved out of the rock under the city, and the water was collected there from off the streets. So the cistern would have some garbage, sewage and dead things in it. It wasn't very nice water at all. The cistern itself was always cracking and leaky.

Which would you rather drink from, and rely on? A running spring or a leaky, yucky cistern?

Israel chose a leaky, yucky cistern. For they had chosen fowl, polluted, false gods that cannot be trusted. How is that possible? Now listen, because you said that you would rather drink from a running spring instead of a yucky cistern - yet you often drink from yucky cisterns! Why would you follow after false gods?! Each one of us here does that often! Listen and I think you will understand.

In verse 5 God says that his people strayed after false gods. They didn't make a beeline for them. They went little by little, so that they hardly realized what they were doing.

In verse 6 God complained “*They did not ask, ‘Where is the Lord?’*” When might a person ask “Where is the Lord”? When you are in trouble. So what do you do when you are sick, when a date you fear draws closer, when you feel the pressure of poverty, or are afraid of some event or person?

For Israel, it used to be obvious. God says in verse 2 that Israel used to be like a loving, devoted bride who trusts her bridegroom. But now, they never trusted in God. Not even the priests, that is, not even the teachers and pastors of the people, trusted in God when they needed help. In verse 8 we read, “*The priests did not ask, ‘Where is the Lord?’*”

So where did they turn, if not to the Lord? They strayed away from God and began slowly but surely to put their trust in false gods. When Jeremiah tried to warn the people of this, they just didn’t believe him. “We’re not worshipping other gods! We worship only the Lord, the God of our fathers Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.” But they weren’t, and they refused to confess what they knew to be true.

Let me ask you this: When you face some sort of crisis - perhaps you feel stressed out over something, maybe you’re afraid of something, you cannot cope on your own - what do you do? Where do you turn?

Some turn to alcohol. Others buy a lottery ticket or go to a bingo hall or maybe a big trip to the casino. “Maybe lady luck will smile on me and save me from my debts, and make me happy with a big win.” Or perhaps you try to bury yourself in something - drugs, mindless music turned too loud in your ears, or partying.

When you do that, do you know what you have done? You have forgotten the Lord - you know, the Father of Jesus Christ.

The God who cared so much for you that he sent his Son into the World to save you, and his Spirit into the world to make us his sons and daughters. You’ve forgotten him and turned to false gods. You stopped trusting in him to solve your problems, and you’ve turned to something else to help you. You’ve turned from the beautiful, cool, clean living spring to drink from a cistern.

Don’t do that. Turn to the Lord every day, and walk with him all day long. He loves you and he is very strong. He will take care of you, because he can and wants to. Blessed is the person who puts his trust in the Lord. May you be blessed.

September 21, 2008  
*Pastor Paul Aasman*

**Deuteronomy 5:8-10** “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.”

**2<sup>nd</sup> Word: No Images**

Reading: Hebrews 1:1-4

There once was a king who went to war. The last thing he did before marching off was to bring his god into the throne room and to talk to his god, asking that the god give him victory. The

king made it clear that he wanted the god to give him a victory, and that a defeat was not to be considered. He even tried some bribery and threats (if you give me victory, I won't replace you, but if you don't...)

So he went to battle.

But he was beaten, and many of his soldiers were killed. The king himself suffered minor injuries, but he made it back to his palace. When he got there, he told the priest to bring the god into the throne room again - he wanted to have a word with him. While the priest was gone to get the god, the king ordered that a whip be brought for him. When the god was standing before him, he took out the whip and whipped his god for not doing what he asked, and for humiliating him before his enemy.

Is that the right way to treat a god?

What's wrong with that? A person should not tell his god what to do. If the god really exists, then the god tells those who worship him what to do, and he himself does whatever pleases him. But a god should not obey his worshipper. The worshipper should obey his god. When it gets turned around, then that means that the god really is no god. He is only something he imagined himself.

God said to Israel: You are never to treat me that way. You may never command me, or tell me what to do. You are never to think that I am equal to or less than you.

If you make an image of God, then it's much easier to treat God as an idol. You can carry him around, and you can put him wherever you want him to be. You can even force him to do certain things because you want him to.

That once happened. Israel was afraid at one time that God was not going to help them win a fight against the Philistines, so they brought the ark of the covenant onto the battle field. That way, God would have to fight against the enemy to save himself! Israel tried to force God to do what they wanted him to do.

But God is wiser than man. He gave the Philistines victory over the Israelites and at the same time brought glory to his name. But that is another story. The point here is that God hates it when we make an image of him. That is why he said to his people in Deut. 4:15-19: *"You saw no form of any kind the day the LORD spoke to you at Horeb out of the fire. Therefore watch yourselves very carefully, so that you do not become corrupt and make for yourselves an idol, an image of any shape, whether formed like a man or a woman, or like any animal on earth or any bird that flies in the air, or like any creature that moves along the ground or any fish in the waters below. And when you look up to the sky and see the sun, the moon and the stars—all the heavenly array—do not be enticed into bowing down to them and worshiping things the LORD your God has apportioned to all the nations under heaven."* God wanted his people to worship him on the basis of teaching and

preaching alone - nothing else. No images, no pictures, no play-acting. Only preaching, only words.

But now, here is the amazing thing. God was so filled with pity and compassion for the world, because it was sinful and destined to perish, that he sent his Son into the world to save it. His Son teaches us about God's love not just in words, but in his very life. He is the exact representation of God's being, and whatever God is, Jesus is. He is the image of the invisible God, and where he is, God is.

But what became of God in Jesus? What did we, the human race, do to God when at last we could see him with our eyes?

We did lay our hands on him. First we tried to force him to be our king, but when he refused, we laid hands on him again and arrested him, tried him, sentenced him to die - though no one could say what wrong he had done. And when he was so totally in our power, we spat on him, struck him in face, made fun of him, and killed him in a gruesome manner: we crucified him.

God used this most horrible thing to accomplish the most blessed thing: through Jesus' suffering and death, God saved us all from the punishment of our sins.

But you see, we cannot have an image of God and remain holy in our thinking about God. We are too sinful. We must obey the 2<sup>nd</sup> commandment, we must worship God in spirit and truth. It

might seem like more fun to watch movies in church, or to do ceremonial dances and bring messages through skits. But God wants us to be taught by words.

But these are not just words. The preaching of the gospel is the power of God. God created the picture of who he is in our hearts through the preaching. So listen, and be shaped by the preaching. You will not only see Jesus, but God himself, for he shows himself to his own people through the preaching of the gospel.

May you be blessed as you worship here from Sunday to Sunday. God will show himself to you.

October 19, 2008  
*Pastor Doug Vandeburgt*

**Deuteronomy 5:11** “You shall not misuse the name of the LORD your God, for the LORD will not hold anyone guiltless who misuses his name.”

*3<sup>rd</sup> Word: The Lord's Name*

Reading: Exodus 34:1-7

Have you ever heard the names of Romeo and Juliet? It is Juliet who at one point wonders aloud, “What’s in a name?” She then says, “That which we call a rose by any other name would smell as sweet.” In other words a name means nothing.

Yet, is that really true? Is there something in a name? My name is Douglas. It is a Scottish name. But I am not Scottish. However, when my father was a young man his best friend was Scottish and went by the name of Douglas, and as a consequence I was named Douglas. But that is only part of what's in my name - the other part of what's in my name is its meaning. It means *from the dark river*. But you see my parents didn't consider the meaning of my name when they picked it for me. I wonder if they still would have picked that name if they knew its dark meaning. Yes, the question 'what's in a name?' includes answering the question – what does a name mean?

Maybe you have tried to figure out what's in your name. But have you tried to figure out what's in the Lord's name? What's in the Lord's name? This evening we read from Exodus 34. In verse 5 it says, "*Then the LORD came down in the cloud and stood there with Moses and proclaimed his name, the LORD.*" In this part of Scripture the Lord proclaims his name. He proclaims to Moses what his name means. And what does he proclaim? Verses 6&7, "*The LORD, the LORD, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin.*" The Lord is compassionate - that means he responds to people who are hurting. The Lord is gracious - that means he responds to people who don't deserve it. The Lord is slow to anger

- that means he doesn't get angry quickly on account of sin. He abounds in love and faithfulness - that means he has lots of love to give and that he is totally faithful to his promises. The Lord forgives sin.

But that is not all the Lord says about his name. He also says, "*Yet he does not leave the guilty unpunished; he punishes the children and their children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation.*" The Lord is also just. Sin committed against him cannot be ignored - it must be punished.

Now when you turn to the New Testament, the Lord's name is proclaimed in the person of Jesus Christ. And with Jesus Christ you see that the Lord's name hasn't changed in meaning. In Jesus, the Lord responds to people who are hurting. In Jesus, the Lord responds to people who don't deserve it. In Jesus, we see the Lord is slow to anger. In Jesus, we see the Lord abounds in love and faithfulness. In Jesus, we see that the Lord forgives sin. In Jesus, we see that the Lord is also just. For Jesus was punished on account of sin – not his, but yours and mine. And so in Jesus, the Lord proclaims his name again as one of mercy and justice.

So you see that the Lord's name is full of meaning. And what the Lord forbids in the third commandment is that anyone empties his name of its meaning. Do some of you remember the old way this commandment was worded? "*You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain?*" What does the word *vain*

mean? It means empty, nothing. When you speak the Lord's name in a way that empties his name of its true meaning, when you speak the Lord's name in a way that turns his name into nothing, then you are misusing his name.

So let us talk about misusing the Lord's name. Normally we refer to this misuse as *blasphemy*. Have you heard of blasphemy? Often when we speak about blasphemy, we think about people who use the Lord's name to express their emotions like anger or excitement. Or we think about people who use the Lord's name to damn people to hell. When you use the Lord's name to express your emotions like anger or excitement, or when you use the Lord's name to damn people to hell, then you are taking his name in vain. You are emptying it and making it nothing.

But misusing the Lord's name is not just a matter of words used wrongly, it is also a matter of a life lived wrongly. When people claim to be Christians but do not live like Christians, then what does this do to the Lord's name? It blasphemes his name. To have the name "Christian" is to carry the name of the Lord with you wherever you go, but if you don't live like a Christian then the question returns, '*What's in a name?*' And the answer is – apparently nothing.

But there is something in a name. There is something in the Lord's name and there is something in the name Christian. And so

I also want to talk about the right use of the Lord's name. For in forbidding us to misuse his name the Lord also commands us to use it rightly.

But how? First of all we use the Lord's name rightly by living as the Lord commands us to live. For then his name will be honoured and glorified among all people. Second of all we use the Lord's name rightly when we use his name to pray to him and sing to him. Again when this is done, like you do here every Sunday, his name is honoured and glorified. Finally, we use his name rightly when we tell other people about the Lord. As Christians, we must tell other people that the only hope for this life and the life to come is found in the name of the Lord Jesus. There is no other name given under heaven by which people can be saved. It is the name of Jesus that we must tell others about.

Jesus is the one who took the punishment of the third commandment in our place. The third commandment ends with a warning for those who misuse the Lord's name – the Lord will not hold him *guiltless*. The Lord will not look at the one who breaks his law and say of that person – not guilty. He cannot do this and still be faithful to his own name.

So what does the Lord do? He sends his one and only Son into this world in order that he might punish him for our sins against his commandments. He looked at his Son and declared him guilty of our sins in order that he might look at whoever believes in his Son

and declare them *guiltless*. Jesus was condemned by God so that you might be acquitted. So let your use of the Lord's name show that you know that his name means salvation for those who believe in him. Yes, let your use of the Lord's name show your thankfulness for the salvation he has given you in Jesus Christ.

October 26, 2008  
*Pastor Paul Aasman*

**Deuteronomy 5:12-15** "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 maidservant 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."

**4<sup>th</sup> Word: Observe the Sabbath Day**

Reading: Genesis 1:26-2:3

Slavery is a terrible thing. Herbert had given me a copy of Reader's Digest last week and told me to read the section "My life as a Slave." It is a terrible story of how a young boy with great love for his father and family, was captured one day in the market at a neighbouring town. It was terrible. The evil 'murahaliin'

swept into the town, savagely murdered all the men and then took the boys and girls north to sell them to Muslim families to serve as slaves. Awful.

God hates slavery. There are few things that God hates more than that. Perhaps he hates death more, and sin. But slavery ranks way up there among the things that God hates.

So God clearly wants to show to us that he is not a slave to anyone or to anything. He does so right in the very first passage of the Bible: Genesis 2. Especially, God is not a slave to work. He does not work because he has to, and he is not driven by some power above him to do anything. When God finished his work, he stopped and he rested. He worked hard for 6 days, but he worked for a purpose - he worked so that in the end he might enjoy what he worked for. He rested so that he might enjoy the creation he had made. God lives for a purpose and is a slave to nobody. He works when he wants, and he does not work when he wants.

And God wants it to be that way for you too. He wants you to have purpose in your life, and he wants you to be free - to be slave to nothing and no one. God is free, and because you are God's image, he wants you to be free too. And to be sure that you stay free, we read in Gen. 2:3 "*And God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it he rested from all the work of creating that he had done.*" God blessed this day and made it holy.

The Sabbath is holy; it was blessed by God. On this day, we are supposed to rest, just like God did, because God blessed it.

Sunday is supposed to be a day for rest and refreshment. It is a day when we are supposed to step back from the daily grind and say, “I’m God’s child. God is taking care of me and God always will take care of me. I don’t have to worry about anything. Today, I will be reminded that I live not to work, or to provide for myself, not to pay my rent, not for anything else. I live for God; he is my creator, and my Saviour. He gives me life and in Jesus Christ, he gives me a bright future.”

This is important. The New Testament church almost right away began to set the first day of the week instead of the 7<sup>th</sup> day, to rest and be refreshed in their faith. Do you know why? Because Jesus rose on the 1<sup>st</sup> day of the week.

We are not slaves, we are not driven to work. We are driven to only one thing: to praise and serve God. He is our Father, and we are not slaves, but children of God.

And we work only because it pleases him. We are not fallen leaves, drifting and blowing about, aimless and without purpose. We are saved by Jesus Christ, have purpose in our lives and have reason to live.

So how will you spend your Sundays? Will you try to find God in the park, walking in nature? You can do a lot better than that. Sunday is a day to gather with God’s people so that we may

sing, pray and worship. If we go to church on Sunday, God will refresh our spirits, free our hearts from enslaving worries, and comfort you with his fatherly care. In this way, Sunday will be a day to celebrate: I’m free. I’m slave to no one.

May the church be that kind of blessing to you, so that you can be a blessing to God.

November 2, 2008  
*Pastor Paul Aasman*

**Deuteronomy 5:16** “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.”

**5<sup>th</sup> Word: Honour your Father and Mother**

Reading: Mark 10:35-45

If I were to ask you to raise your hand if you had been physically or sexually abused as a child, I suspect that we’d have a sea of hands showing. It is a great and terrible plague in our time. From what many of you have told me, when people in positions of power and authority misuse that position to abuse you for their own pleasure, then they bring pain in your heart that never goes away, and injury to your soul that never heals.

I assure you, one day it will heal. Your crippled bodies and broken minds will heal. Your tortured soul will heal too. Jesus is

the great healer, and you will experience it, if you put your faith in him. And those who have abused their power and authority - they will face the one who has all authority and power, and he will confront them for what they have done. You will be satisfied that justice has been done, and you will even be able to forgive those who have hurt you.

Jesus taught the disciples about authority because they seemed to have the wrong idea about it. James and John in particular seemed to want to have high authority, probably because they thought that this would give them more power and honour. If that is why you might want to have an important job or position, then you've got the wrong idea.

Jesus showed that unbelievers (he calls them 'gentiles') think this way. They lord it over one another, meaning they used their authority in a self-serving way, to press their own honour and dignity. But those who have authority over them limit them, so they cannot just do whatever they want. A schoolteacher has quite a bit of authority, but he or she has to answer to a principal. A police officer has lots of authority, but he has the captain of police over him. For fear of being caught striking a student, or of beating a prisoner, they usually will not do these things.

But sometimes they do anyway. Sometimes politicians take kick-backs for political decisions. Sometimes police take bribes or do worse things. In the movie theatres there is a movie

called "Changeling" that tells the horror story of a mom who is tormented by the police in the 1920's in Los Angeles. I'm told that it is based on a true story. And sometimes, adults sexually abuse children.

Do they sometimes get away with it? Yes. Will anyone get away with it completely? No. God sees everything and God will judge. Those who abuse their authority and use it for their own personal pleasure or gain should fear God. They can trample the weak and vulnerable now, but God will rise up to defend them.

Jesus teaches in our passage that God is the ultimate judge. He also teaches what the true nature of authority is. God does not give people authority so that they can use it for themselves. He gives people authority so that we can serve people better.

And nobody has shown how to use authority better than Jesus. God the Father gave the man Jesus great power and authority. When he was baptised in the Jordan River, he was ordained to a high office: Messiah. He was also given great powers to help him do the work of his office.

But what did he use his power and authority for? He refused to use it for his own benefit. He showed that in the wilderness when the devil tempted him to turn stones to bread. He would not. Instead, he used his authority and power to preach the good news, to heal the sick, to restore sight to the blind and to release those who were captive to evil spirits. In the end, he used

his position to die on the cross for our sake - because it was the only way that we could be saved.

Jesus shows us the right way to use authority and power. For as Jesus says in verse 43 that the way to greatness is the path of service. To become great, you must be a servant, *“For the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”*

Do that, my friend. You have some position of authority and some power. Use it to serve your neighbour. Use it to help someone. Begin the process to restore authority and power to honour and dignity. The church can be a great blessing to our neighbourhoods when Christians serve. Let each of us be as Christ: servants to all.

November 9, 2008  
*Pastor Paul Aasman*

**Deuteronomy 5:17** “You shall not murder.”

**6<sup>th</sup> Word: You shall not Murder**

Reading: Galatians 5:1-15

About two years ago, when I first came to Streetlight, Richard Bultje was showing me around at some of the lodging homes, and as we passed through one hallway, he said in hushed voice, “Behind that door is a man who once murdered a person.” The door was closed. Some time later, I passed by again, and the

door was opened, and I saw him. It was the first time I’d seen a murderer. I’ll never forget it. I’ve led a sheltered life.

It makes you wonder. What kind of person would do that? What does it take to rise up and kill someone? Do you think you could do it? Well, do you know what a spider does when it meets another spider? They will duel to the death, unless one escapes. That is what it would be like between human beings, if it were not for God’s special kindness to man to prevent them, by force of law. In hell, God will take away those special kindnesses, and everyone will be a fugitive from each other. No matter who you are, you are not just capable of killing in cold blood, but would actually do it from time to time if there were no laws forbidding it.

Do you find that hard to believe? Do you think that is unlikely for you? Let me ask you this: Do you think that you are more meek than Moses? Moses, we are told was the meekest man on the earth. And yet, Moses once killed a man in a fit of rage, with his bare hands! Do you think that you are more godly than King David? He was praised as the man after God’s very heart. Yet David once arranged the murder of a man because he wanted to have his wife.

In our scripture reading, Paul sees the passion of murder as threatening the very survival of the church. The church is a place where the potential for murder is increased, not lessened. For it is supposed to be a community of love, but the greater the love, the

greater the potential for hatred - for you never hate so much as the ones whom you once loved. It is the reason why one of the most common types of murder is the murder of one's spouse, children or parents. These are the people whom we have loved more than any.

The church is also a place where murder is not just possible but a real danger. It can happen when people stop depending on Jesus Christ by faith, and begin to rely on their own inner power to be good. They don't pray to God to give them strength, nor do they give praise to God when they do well. They begin a slide down into living purely for the pleasure of their own flesh.

So, Paul points out in verse 14 & 15, there are only two options: Either you will love your neighbour as yourself (because you trust in God and live by the power of Jesus), or you begin to bite and devour each other until you have been destroyed by each other (because you did not trust in Jesus Christ and God's grace no longer moves your heart).

The 6<sup>th</sup> commandment is not for strangers. It is for you and me. You shall not murder. We must not diminish the lives of others; you must instead increase life by serving one another in love. Jesus especially wants to be known as "The Life." He died on the cross in order that he might give life. Now we must be a life-giving community who oppose with all our power the forces of death. Those forces are pulsating right outside the door, and worse, it pulsates inside each one of us.

You want to know where? It pulses in our heart. Have you ever been publicly humiliated by someone? What was your reaction? You dreamed of a way to get revenge. We all do that. There you will find the passion of jealousy, envy, anger, hatred, and desire for revenge. We must never allow these emotions to reign in our hearts. If we do, we will do hurtful things to others and to ourselves.

In verse 5 Paul says, "*But by faith we eagerly await through the Spirit the righteousness for which we hope.*" Do you long to be righteous? Do you long for the day when you only do what is good in God's eyes? If you believe in Jesus, he will begin to give you perfect righteousness already now. You will love. You will be free and you will use your freedom to love.

So get rid of anger. I see much anger downtown. There is so much social injustice that people are suffering here. There is violence as people use each other for selfish reasons.

Let the church be a community of life in this culture of death. Let the church shine the light of love, of forgiveness. Try this week to show a new side: gentleness, kindness, self-control, patience. Respond to your enemy with love, because he's probably never experienced it before. Surprise with the force of life and the grace of Jesus. Then, perhaps, in the name of the precious Saviour, not only will you hope for righteousness, but others, seeing its beauty in you, will seek it too, in the name of the Saviour Jesus.

You are not obeying the 6<sup>th</sup> commandment by simply refraining from killing. You are obeying it when you are overcoming the power of death by the force of love and life.

November 30, 2008  
*Pastor Paul Aasman*

**Deuteronomy 5:18** “You shall not commit adultery.”

**7th Word: *You shall not Commit Adultery***

Reading: Proverbs 6:20-29

In verse 27 & 28, the writer of Proverbs compares sexual desire to fire. He asks, “*Can a man scoop fire into his lap without his clothes being burned?*” Imagine a homeless fellow under a bridge - it’s bitter cold, and he cannot get warm. He builds a fire, and still, he cannot drive out the deep chill. So he decides to scoop burning pieces of wood and coals up onto his lap, hoping that at last this will warm him.

Would that work? Perhaps, but he makes more problems than he solved. He will not only burn his clothes, but himself!

So is fire a bad thing? No. It’s a great thing. This room is nice and warm because there is a fire burning in the Streetlight furnace right now. Hopefully you have one in your home, too. But it can hurt you badly if you use it improperly. How many

houses have burned down because people have set up heaters badly, have burned fire in stoves or fireplaces unsafely?!

So what about sex? Is it a bad thing? No. Sex is not a bad thing at all! On the contrary, God created us as sexual beings to make life rich. Imagine life if you did not have a mother and father. What would family life be without both brothers and sisters? What would school have been like if there were no girls and boys there? What would life be like if people did not fall in love and in a loving relationship, feel great desire for each other, emotional, social, spiritual and sexual desire?

But sex becomes a bad thing, just like fire becomes a bad thing, when it burns where it should not burn. God put a very clear limit on sex when he said in the 7<sup>th</sup> commandment, “*You shall not commit adultery.*” A person who has sexual desire for a married person, is being very foolish - it is like someone trying to get warm by heaping burning coals on his or her lap. Proverbs 6:27-29 tells us, “*Can a man scoop fire into his lap without his clothes being burned? Can a man walk on hot coals without his feet being scorched? So is he who sleeps with another man's wife; no one who touches her will go unpunished.*”

But the commandments often give us an example. We can apply the commandment much more deeply in our lives if we listen to Jesus’ teaching from the Sermon on the Mount. In Matthew 5:27-30, Jesus said: “*You have heard that it was said, 'Do*

*not commit adultery.' But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart. If your right eye causes you to sin, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to go into hell."*

Jesus describes sexual sin as a sin we commit especially with our eyes. We see things, and it arouses sexual feelings in us. You see a pretty woman, a handsome man, and you might feel desire in your heart. That is like fire burning in your lap.

So it is clear that God wants us, not just to avoid sleeping with a married person, but also to live pure and chaste lives. He wants us to have pure hearts, to use our eyes to take into our minds what is undefiled.

That is very important when there is so much offered to delight the eye, sexually. A trip to the grocery store confronts you with cheap magazines with pictures of scantily clad stars; a walk down the aisle of a video store can be a walk of shame because of the types of material you can rent; but to click onto the internet is the biggest danger ever.

When you allow yourself to enjoy these sinful things, they always hurt you. They can weight your conscience and plague

your prayers. They can damage your real life relationships with other people. And they can become a form of slavery by which you need it again and again, longer, worse, more frequently.

Sexual immorality is cursed by God. It is unfaithfulness. John describes the forces of evil in the book of Revelation in the form of a prostitute. She is unfaithful, and she uses men for her own pleasure, drawing them to herself by her sexual beauty.

But John also calls the church a bride. She wears white because her chief beauty is her faithfulness, purity and devotion to her husband. And for this, she is loved by the Saviour Jesus Christ. A bride is one who enjoys her husband, also sexually. There the fire burns warmly, but it imparts warmth, and drives out the chill. Sex can be pure, good, even spiritual. When it burns in the hearth, it will cause a man and woman to pray to God for this unique and wondrous gift.

So let us be the bride of Christ. Let us strive to be faithful to God, and pure in our minds. Let us pray for the special power of the Holy Spirit in a sexually supercharged society, that we might remain the bride of Christ, and as such, bring an even brighter witness into our world of salvation by God love.

December 7, 2008  
Pastor Paul Aasman

**Deuteronomy 5:19** “You shall not steal.”

*8<sup>th</sup> Word: You shall not Steal*

Reading: Mark 12:41-44

The 8<sup>th</sup> commandment says, “*You shall not steal.*” The passage we read from was chosen because it has to do with this commandment. I hope that you see the connection by the end of this sermon.

The Hebrew word for “steal” is a rather unique word. In the original it has to do with stealing a person, not stealing property. You shall not steal a person. Now that may seem a little strange to you, but to the first people to hear the 10 commandments, it was not strange at all. They knew all about it. Stealing a person was a big problem in the ancient world that Israel knew; it was a very significant thing in their history. Do you remember the story of Joseph and his brothers? Joseph’s older brothers hated him so much that they were ready to kill him. When Joseph came to visit them far from home one day, they threw in him a pit, intending to kill him there. But when Midianite traders came by, guess what they did? They sold him like a slave and he was taken to Egypt by these traders, and sold to a wealthy Egyptian.

Some 40 years later, Joseph’s whole family moved to Egypt, became a nation, and eventually Pharaoh made slaves of them all. They were sold into slavery.

God hates traffic in human bodies. The enslavement of the African peoples by several European nations in the 1600-1700’s is a stunning sin against direct and indirect teachings in the Bible, and a shocking act of evil against our fellow human beings. God hates slavery. He is the God of freedom. When he saw his people suffering in Egypt, he liberated them.

The 8<sup>th</sup> commandment forbids at root that we should steal a person because this is the devil’s own work. It is what Satan wanted - to steal Adam and Eve from God in Paradise. He hated it that they were devoted to God. With smooth, deceitful words, he lured them into a trap, and stole them, body and soul, from God. Adam and Eve, and all their children (that includes you and me) became children of the devil. We were a stolen people - stolen by the cunning evil of the devil.

God hates slavery. He is the God of freedom. When he saw human beings, created to be his image, for eternal fellowship with him, he laid a plan for liberation. He sent his Son Jesus into the world to free us, body and soul, from the power of the devil. We had been stolen. Those who believe in Jesus have been freed from slavery; the shackles of iron chains are broken.

Now God wants us to live for him, not because we have to, but because we want to. He wants us to give our lives as a joyful offering of love and thankfulness to him. He wants us to live with him in eternal friendship, and he will bring us into a place where those who would steal our bodies and hearts will no longer threaten that friendship.

Now anything that we might do that is not devoted to him is an act of theft. We rob God. We owe him our lives. If we instead use our gifts (life, health, money, strength, computer, creativity) to do evil things, we have deprived God of what we owe him.

So when Jesus was sitting by the temple, watching as people put their gifts for God in the box for the temple treasury, he was absolutely delighted when a widow gave two very small copper coins, even though it was worth only a fraction of a penny. Many people were giving very large sums of money, but that was not as important to God as what this woman gave.

That is important to me. Every week, Hilco, Bert, and sometimes I too, help count the money collected on Sundays. Some people put in twenties; it is not unusual to receive fifties, or cheques worth much more. But God sees each penny, and sometimes, those pennies are worth more to him than all the bills and cheques, because they were all that some people had to live on. Yet instead of using it for themselves, they gave it to God.

When you give all that you had to live on, then you are giving all that you are and all that you have. That is what God wants from all of us. It is the response of a person who is free, living in the joy of Christ and his salvation. God gave all that he had, his most precious Son for you. If you want a relationship with him, then you need to be like this widow, prepared to give all that you have, and all that you are, to God.

I don't mean that we all need to become poor. We all need to dedicate our whole life to God, every day, every minute. Let us not devote ourselves to sinful activity. Let us devote ourselves to worship, praise and thanks to God. Then we will not be guilty of stealing.

January 4, 2009  
*Pastor Chris Bosch*

**Deuteronomy 5:20** “You shall not give false testimony against your neighbour.”

**9<sup>th</sup> Word: You shall not give false testimony**

Reading: Zechariah 8:1-3, 14-19; John 14:1-7

Order in the court! The honorable judge Blackwood presiding. Let the first witness please come forward. Good. Place your hand on the Bible - do you swear to tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth so help you God?

That's a familiar scene in courtrooms across the land. There is a court-case in a courtroom, a judge, an accused, lawyers or, advocates, and there are witnesses. The scene may be familiar, at least to some of us.

Those witnesses are very important. They can make or break a person. Truthful witnesses will benefit the cause of justice; lying, false witnesses will not. They can ruin a person's reputation. Worse, they can see to it that an innocent person is condemned.

In the ninth commandment the Lord God says, "*You shall not bear false witness against your neighbour.*" He doesn't just say, "you shall not lie" but, "you shall not give false witness!" That's broader, deeper, more far-reaching than being a prohibition against lying.

With this commandment the Lord God said to His people, "I am the Lord your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt, the house of bondage. You shall not bear false witness against your neighbour!" He said, "You shall love the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth."

Now long ago, in Bible days, court cases were not decided behind closed doors and in front of a judge or judges. Then, a court case was decided by a group of elders or eldest in the gate of the town. Those elders served like a jury and every case was handled publicly. In those days there were no lawyers. We can

understand how important the testimony of the witnesses would be.

The Lord God insists that everyone love the truth, speak the truth, and walk in the truth. It is no wonder that he insists on it, for He Himself is the God of truth of justice and right. The Bible says that "*righteousness and justice are the foundation of (Your) His throne.*" (Psalm 89:14). There is not even a suggestion of falsehood in Him. "*God is not a man, that He should lie.*" (Numbers 23:19)

He wants to see evidence of right and truth. Not just in the lives of His own people, whom He placed in a special relationship, called a covenant, with Him. He wants the world to know the truth and to live it. Earlier we sang Psalm 15. In that psalm David asked God this question, "Lord, who may dwell in your sanctuary, (that is, in heaven)? Who may live on your holy hill?" The answer? "He whose walk is blameless and who does what is righteous, who speaks the truth from his heart and has no slander on his tongue, who does his neighbour no wrong and casts no slur on his fellow man" (vv.1-3) (no slur, no bad-mouthing, saying shameful things about your fellow man).

But now, what is this truth that we are to love and live? Someone (Ursinus, one of the co-authors of the Heidelberg Catechism) has spoken of it this way: Truth is a firm purpose by which we always embrace true thoughts and opinions. We speak

and defend the same because of our sense of duty. We keep our contracts and promises and avoid in our speaking every kind of deceit - for the glory of God and the safety of our neighbour!

The opposite of truth is falsehood and the reason God hates that so much is because falsehood is the work of the devil himself. The Bible says that when the devil speaks, he lies, for that is his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies (John 8: 43-44). What does that devil do but promote the lie and the lies in our society? He laughs when he sees and hears people gossiping, lying not only before judge and jury but talking evil behind someone's back.

And there is a great deal of falsehood today. Open a newspaper, hear a news-broadcast and you hear of lies in high and low places. Officials are accused of corruption, of 'cooking the books.' There is falsehood in marriage, in industry. There is falsehood in what is spoken and what is denied. And the Lord God hears it all and sees it all - those works of the devil - and He is angry.

But thanks be to God - He sent His Son Jesus Christ into the world. He died, for sinners, who are ashamed of their lies as well as all of their sins. He died and He paid for shameful words of those who nevertheless believe in Him - who throw themselves on the mercy of His court and who cry, "O Lord forgive! Forgive me my lies, big and small, my truthless, faithless words, my

crooked deeds which hurt my neighbour; my sly but calculated falsehood which I hid from my neighbour but cannot hide from You!" Yes, thanks be to God for sending His Son - for not only did he pay for my sins so that these are covered by His blood. He is, as we read, "*The way and the truth and the life.*"

There are those who today are heard to say, "Get a life!" What do they mean but, "Live it up! Do, say, think, whatever your heart desires. Don't bear false witness against your neighbour? Why not, everyone else does, so why not join the crowd - you'll even enjoy it!" But that is not life, not a real life. For it is lived outside of Jesus Christ and such a life is headed for disaster - for hell and for God's condemnation. But living and walking in the truth means that you want to live the way Christ Jesus wants you to live. It means that you love Him and your neighbour.

Living in that love means you will not want to harm your neighbour (1 Corinthians 13). You will do him or her no wrong. You want to be, or you are, a Christian, and Christians are on a different path than those who are on the side of the devil. Christians love the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth. For they know God's command: "*You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and soul and mind, and your neighbour as yourself.*" That means they will surely love the Word of God, for that Word is God's own testimony. It tells us so much about His

faithfulness - how He keeps His Word even when His own people often turned their backs to Him.

It also tells us what he expects from us: love the whole truth. Don't just say, "I don't lie," but at the same time gossip about your neighbor; "I love the Lord, but I sure hate that guy!"

If we love all the truth that God has made known to us then we'll want to have Jesus and His city of truth, Jerusalem, in our sights. Then we can't be misled by the devil or by some serpent who'd love to keep our eyes off the Lord and His Word. Then we need to keep in mind that the Lord is working very hard to gather His people, that one day they will live in peace and in security. That day is coming, for God has promised it. *"Would they realize the good of those promises? Would there be celebrations of love and truth and peace?"* (Zech. 8: 19).

Then what were God's people to do but to speak the truth to each other and to give sound judgments in their courts. How were they to live? Not in plotting evil against their neighbour and not loving the false oath. For, said the Lord, "I hate all this." But who and what does the Lord love and what does He want to see? Many people, including Streetlight people, who love the truth and speak it openly. People who do what they can to guard and promote their neighbour's good name.

This is what the Lord had his servant, the apostle Peter says about it in his first letter, ch. 3: 8-12: *"Finally, all of you, live in*

*harmony with one another; be sympathetic, love as brothers, be compassionate and humble. Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult, but with blessing, because to this you were called so that you may inherit a blessing. For, 'Whoever would love life and see good days must keep his tongue from evil and his lips from deceitful speech. He must turn from evil and do good; he must seek peace and pursue it. For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous and his ears are attentive to their prayer, but the face of the Lord is against those who do evil.'*"

I know, and more important, the Lord knows that this is hard. That's why the Holy Spirit was poured out. That's why He has given us this wonderful instrument called prayer - that we might ask Him to work that desire for truth and peace and right in our hearts; ask Him to make us strong to stand against the lies of the devil; to know right from wrong, truth from lies, honesty from deceit.

What does it mean but that you and I must "set apart Christ as Lord" in our hearts (1 Peter 3:15). In that way we may reach out to our neighbour. This week, when our Bible studies begin again we can say to others, "Come with us, to learn more about this one great God and Saviour, to study His Word, so that we may know more about Jesus Christ, the way, the truth and the life." Then one day we will stand before the Great and Glorious Judge of all of mankind. But then we will not need to be afraid. For by

grace, through faith we will inherit His blessing - even that glorious blessing, of eternal life for those who believe in Him and walk the path of truth, now and forever.

January 11, 2009  
*Pastor Paul Aasman*

**Deuteronomy 5:21** “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.”

**10th Word: You shall not Covet**

Reading: Philippians 4:2-9

Nearly 2000 years ago, there was a man named Anthony in Egypt, in the great city of Alexandria. He tried very hard to live a righteous life, but try as he might; he found at the end of each day that he had done things wrong and sinful. One day he decided that he would solve the problem of sin. He would move out of the city into the desert. He told nobody where he was going. He headed SW into the trackless desert, found a nice sandy hill, dug a hole, lay down in the hole, and began a routine of spiritual exercises that he would maintain for the next 50 years. There was nobody there in the desert for him to kill, no parents to disobey, no possibility of desecrating the Sabbath day, no women to commit adultery with,

and because he took a vow to speak nearly no words, he was in no danger of using God's name in vain, or bearing false witness.

Sinless perfection would be easy, Anthony thought, out here in the desert. But Anthony discovered that even in the desert, he could not triumph over sin. On the contrary, he found that his struggle against sin was just about as hard, and that he failed miserably every day. He discovered that if he let his mind and imagination wander into sinful patterns; he would become so polluted that he would feel farther from God than ever.

And his mind and imagination did wander into sinful patterns. Always. They never stopped. The harder he tried, the more difficult it became, even out here in the desert. He could leave behind the evil city, but he could never leave behind his evil heart. His heart was evil, and he needed to be delivered by God's grace from the sin that was rooted deeply there.

Many people make the same mistake as Anthony. When I tell a person that Jesus will save them from the judgement their sins deserve, then they say: “But I don't sin.” They really believe that. A number of people have said simply that they think that I don't sin. But I do sin. A lot. Like Anthony the Hermit. And so do you.

The 10th commandment makes that clear. This commandment does not forbid an action, or a deed (murder, bowing to an idol, cursing, murder etc.), but a type of thinking.

We are not allowed to covet or desire what we don't have. We are not allowed to dream about things that don't belong to us. A man should not dream about having sex with a woman that is not his wife; and a woman should not dream about a man who is not her husband. Of course you're not supposed to steal your neighbour's ipod, but dreaming about stealing it is just as bad in God's book.

Maybe at the end of the day you can say that you didn't break any of the commandments in what you did. But in your thoughts, in your imagination and in your heart you did. We always do. Anthony the Hermit found that out to his bitter disappointment; there is no escape from our sinful hearts. No matter who you are, you need Christ, and there are no especially righteous people. We are all woefully lost in sin, if not because of outward deeds, then because of pride in our heart, addiction to lustful thoughts and desires, pleasure in sinful dreams. They are all deep expressions of hatred for God.

But I praise God for this commandment because you see God does not just want us to obey him in our deeds, he wants us to obey him in our heart. Outward obedience to the law should be only a reflection of inward obedience - rooted in the passion of love. Pure deeds are only possible for people who have a pure heart. To the pure in heart, all things are pure.

But you see God did not just forbid us to think evil thoughts, or desire what we are not allowed to do. He instructed us

about thinking good thoughts. In our passage, Paul tells us what we should think about. Of course we should not think about things that are disgusting, polluted, condemned or wrong. We should think about things that are right, pure, lovely, admirable, excellent, praiseworthy. "*Think about such things,*" Paul writes.

Get your heart pure. You can do that in the city just as well as in the desert. You can do that here in church, and you can do that in your bedroom too. Are you thinking pure, right, praiseworthy thoughts right now? Keep it up, even when you leave here, and get home.

For God wants to change you with the gospel you hear tonight. He wants to change your heart. He wants to be the fullness that fills you, the passion that drives you, the power that moves you. Jesus Christ has purchased you with his blood - your body and your heart. He wants your heart and your mind. If you believe in Jesus, then he will have it. And you will experience life in its fullness.

Oh, what a day that will be when I no longer think sinful thoughts, when I no longer am driven by sinful passions or drawn down by powerful addictions. Oh what a day when my heart and mind are freed from the power of sin.

But you can participate in that day now. Think about these things. If you believe in Jesus Christ, he will give you the power

to do it. And if you do, then you will have not just the peace of God in your heart; you will have in you the God of peace himself.