



# **THUNDER ON THE BURNING MOUNTAIN**

-BY REV. C. HUTCHINSON

"THUNDER ON THE BURNING MOUNTAIN"

PART TWO

FROM A SERIES OF RADIO MESSAGES GIVEN  
IN AUGUST

-BY REV. C. HUTCHINSON

COVER DESIGN: NEIL G. STROHSCHNEIN

1973  
BEREAN BIBLE COLLEGE,  
CALGARY, ALBERTA



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## CHAPTER SIX:

### WILL IT EVER BE RIGHT TO DROP THE BOMB?

You certainly know what bomb is in mind as we ask this question. We mean that latest, terrifying horror called the Nuclear Bomb, the newest, most devilishly efficient way men have ever devised for the purpose of killing other men. Will it ever be right to drop that bomb?

Men have done it. The people of Hiroshima have felt its searing blast, its flesh-scorching atomic radiation, as about 50,000 Japanese were broken by that hellish hail from the skies. The haunting horror was unleashed on the world, to be feared ever since.

The young men in the plane that carried the bomb were simply carrying out orders. They probably knew very little of what was involved. Perhaps they are more in need of sympathy. One thing I read about them was this: that some society woman in New York tried to lionize them, and made a huge cake in the shape of an atomic explosion, with the mushroom cloud made of flour and sugar. Pictures of that cake were published far and wide, showing the embarrassed men holding the cake knife, with the silly, simpering woman smirking in the background. Across America went a tide of revulsion and indignation over such crass obscenity. All men, across the world, hated the picture of that cake. People have argued as to whether or not the Bomb on Hiroshima was necessary, but one thing all agreed -- it wasn't funny!

Despite all the "righteous indignation," men did not quit making the bombs. They are waiting today, possibly for more wholesale killing. Will it ever be right to drop those bombs? Will it ever be right to kill our fellow humans with any form of weapon, whether a tommy gun, or a knife, or even with a stone axe if all other weapons are banned? What did God mean when He gave the sixth commandment, "Thou shalt not kill?"

No one would dare to say that this matter is not relevant today. The moment we quote those four words we open a vast, often acrimonious realm of discussion. There is more confusion over this matter than any other in our day! Four words: all of one syllable; but what an issue they involve! Vast applications and interpretations have been made regarding this commandment of God. Does this mean that the bomb must never be dropped? Is killing forbidden under all circumstances, including the woman who desires to kill her unborn child?

These words have been a strong fortress for the vegetarians. They say that it means "Never kill an animal." Such people don't mind killing a cabbage, even by boiling it alive (a cabbage has life), but they will not kill an animal -- or would they? Would they refuse to kill a mad dog, with its jaws slavering with rabies, as it was attacking their child? People are not always consistent! Some Hindus will not kill a

fly or mosquito that carries malaria. Yet, they may, without compunction, throw the neighboring Mohammedan's children down a well. In India, "sacred" monkeys go unharmed, even as they raid the crops. The rats go unharmed as they eat the grain, while thousands of children starve to death.

This is not what God meant. On occasion, God ordered the killing of human beings, as well as animals of all kinds. Who was it that caused the earth to open up and swallow Korah and his followers. (Numbers 16:31-32) Who was it that killed lying Ananias and Sapphira? (Acts 5: 5-10) God did it. It is thus evident that even the killing of people is not always wrong.

What then, did God mean by "Thou shalt not kill?" The word used in the Hebrew (Exodus 20), and in the Greek, (Matthew 5, Mark 10 and Luke 18) where our Lord quotes this sixth commandment is a unique word, meaning "to dash in pieces, a criminal act of murder." It means to vindictively kill a human being.

Today, as in Moses' day, we try to make a distinction, and call such killing "First degree murder." In the old days an unintentional killer could flee to a "city of refuge" until he had a proper trial, safe from the avenger of blood. God literally said, "Thou shalt not murder."

Yet, even with such distinctions in mind, men are still confused by the many issues involved. We live in an age when, as far as common talk goes, there seems to be an abhorrence of killing. Yet, in these same times men have never before killed so many. So we face difficult questions like the following:

1. How can our courts decide if a killing is accidental or intentional, justified or unjustified? Only God knows what goes on in a man's mind when he decides to kill. In the Old Testament days it was judges who were in touch with God who had to decide, as they sought His wisdom. Such judges are a rare breed today.

2. Is the pacifist, the non-resister right, and so all war wrong? Is it right to protect the weak against the bully, to protect a woman being beaten and violated on the street or should one pass by on the other side? Is taking up arms, even if it is just the arm of flesh and bone with a fist on the end of it, to deliver the oppressed to be decried as "violence"? God used some violent measures to make Pharaoh "Let His people go." Jesus Himself used what we might call "violence" as He beat the money-changers out of the Temple with a whip of small cords. He hurt them, for God's honor was at stake. To support and protect the weak it is sometimes necessary to fight the strong, even if it means bloody war. Many who speak of Jesus as the great pacifist are those who do not believe in Him as the God of justice! May He keep in all of us an abhorrence of war, but also keep alive in us a sense of right, duty and responsibility. There are some who kill when they should not, but there are also those who do not kill when they should.

3. What about suicide? Is it wrong for a man to kill himself? Suicide is fearfully common today, especially among university students, psychiatrists (of all people) and in the happy "welfare" states. This is

crime, a violation of God's law. Life is the gift of God, and the suicide throws that gift back into His face.

There is always a better way, God's way, of meeting life's greatest problems. The Bible gives numerous examples of suicides. King Saul, the man who said near the tragic end of his life, "I have played the fool," at least attempted suicide. The priest Ahithophel hanged himself, after rebelling against King David. Judas the traitor did likewise, after he had betrayed our Lord. They were all evil men coming to an evil end. With recognized suicide, there are often unrecognized ways of ending life, such as the violation of health rules, harmful pleasures, the burning out of the body with liquor and drugs, and even excessive speed on the highways. All these are killers--killers of self, and others often involved. That great ship the "Titanic" that went speeding across the Atlantic, despite ice warnings, seeking to make a record crossing, was a killer. As she struck an iceberg, despite the boast that she was unsinkable, she carried 1513 people to a watery grave.

4. Another area of confusion is over the matter of euthenasia, the "mercy-killing" of the suffering, the aged or the infirmed. This is commonly done to put someone out of his misery, as the saying goes. An Amalekite told David that he was the one who "finished off" King Saul. He gave as his reason, "I slew him because I was sure that he could not live after that he had fallen. (II Samuel 1:10) The word "sure" is the catch in this matter. How could he be sure? David utterly condemned him. Ethically, a doctor must do all possible to sustain life in his patient, or he becomes guilty of murder by neglect. That is not an easy matter, especially when a man asks to be left alone so that he can die. It is easy indeed to become confused.

5. There is further confusion about abortion, the taking away of the life of an unborn child. Human life is there. Does "thou shalt not kill" apply? If not, why not? I hear of nurses having to quit their work in utter revulsion at the horror of seeing these tiny human forms move or even hearing a wimper from them, and yet seeing them thrown out as refuse. The common excuse is "They could not live anyway." They could, if they were left until naturally born. Apart from urgent medical necessity, abortion is the killing of human life. It is a tiny life indeed, but begun by God, with an already determined personal character at the moment of conception. Any geneticist knows that!

6. What about capital punishment? Two sides of the killing question are evident here. Is it right to kill the killer? Are men justified in such a case, in the taking of human life? Again, we have a confused issue. The common excuse used to help out the criminal is, "Capital punishment is not a deterrent." One thing is certain. It deters the murderer from repeating his crime while enjoying his leave from jail, granted by some sentimental sociologist. The forgotten word in such discussions is "justice." Punishment to fit the crime is still basic to human society, whether deterrent or not. God made this very clear, lest we misunderstand the sixth commandment. It was emphasized in this statement, far predating the Mosaic law: "Whoso sheddeth man's



blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made he man." (Genesis 9:6) Murder is an affront and offense to God, for man is made in his image. Up to the days of Noah, there was no capital punishment, and man became so evil, violent, and sexually wicked that God had to send a flood that destroyed all human society. Then He gave this prime commandment that has never been revoked. Soft society tries to smooth over evil deeds and make them sound nice. Do you remember the old Mother Goose rhyme about the "Three Blind Mice"? Could you still repeat it? There is now a new version with all the violence taken out. It is called the "Three Kind Mice," and says: "They all ran after the farmer's wife, who cut them some cheese with a carving knife." Someone added: "Did you ever hear such a tale in your life?" As long as men live on with murder in their hearts, violence will be here to stay. It must be met as it is weighed, in the even scales of justice.

7. Here is another item for consideration. A man leaped from the top of a high building, and died on the sidewalk below, his body broken and bloody. Yes, that was suicide, and an evil deed. But the negro janitor who knew him said, "When a man has lost God and the help of men, there ain't nothing to do but jump." Before his body was broken his spirit was broken. Someone killed him by discouraging him until he gave up. Someone killed his faith, ideals, and hopes. There are men who kill through poisonous drugs, by deathtrap automobiles and unsafe buildings, through maintaining rotten slums, and touting useless medicines, all to make money. But men can also kill through ingratitude, neglect, child-bullying, cruelty, and indifference that destroys a man's soul and spirit. A man can psychologically kill his wife. Others kill by surrendering ethical standards to the current tide of materialism which does not produce any moral law. There is no real reason why the materialist would not poison his wife, if he can get away with the deed. Over all these things, "Thou shalt not kill," must be written again.

But it is not enough just to refrain from killing. There is a higher application of the sixth commandment, a positive side that needs to be learned. Saying "Live and let live" is not enough. Far better is the standard, "Live and help to live." God alone knows how greatly our fellow-men need help. Jesus never had to warn His followers about becoming gangsters or murderers, but He did find it necessary to condemn those who pass by on the other side of a wounded brother, of one who is not a brother. God loves and values every man.

Lorado Taft was setting up Donatello's statue of a boy, and setting lights around it for proper illumination. He tried first with the lights on the floor, but was shocked to find they made the boy look like a moron. He tried one arrangement after another, until finally he set the lights above the statue, shining down on it. Then the boy looked like an angel! When we look at a man from our earthly level, we sometimes think that he is a moron, and say, "He doesn't matter." But if we look

on men and women as God does, and see how he values each one, we will realize this at once: "I must not kill in any way, physically or morally." "I must help him to live."

God gave the rules for our good. We who know Him must, by all means show men the way from death to life, the way to joyful living on earth, and the life-way to heaven above, through the living Saviour!

## CHAPTER SEVEN:

### THE TRAGEDY OF THE STOLEN WOMAN

Can a man steal a woman in our enlightened day? This question could have stirred in your mind one of those cartoon pictures of a big, hairy hulk of brutality dragging a woman by her hair into his cave. Perhaps you think that couldn't happen today. Your argument might run like this: "No, not in our civilized countries, at least. The law forbids it, and besides that, we now have "Women's Lib." This sounds like Paradise regained. Have the relationships between the sexes reached a state of complete equanimity or can a man still steal a woman?"

In these strange times another element has become prominent. It is the claim that a woman cannot be stolen because she doesn't belong to anybody; nobody owns her and so nobody will say that another person has stolen his "property." This is practically an offshoot of the "Women's Lib." idea. Women are now said to be free, to owe allegiance to nobody but themselves. If they move from man to man, that's their own business.

Think of this recent newspaper headline: "Fidelity is just a funny word to many of today's young." (What the editor meant by "many" is anybody's guess.) Here are some extracts from the article that followed: "The concept of fidelity, whether it be in a non-legalized relationship or in marriage, is being increasingly questioned by many young adults. "It's a funny word," said Susan Evans, a 21-year-old musician, "Relationships should be open." To many of these young men and women, a closed one-to-one relationship is almost automatically equated with jealousy and possessiveness, emotions they both reject and fear ... Even among the free-thinkers, marriage is, for many, the ultimate plan if not the ideal. Others would marry only if a child were involved, and a small group considered marriage unnecessary under any circumstances.

Those unthinking young people to whom "fidelity" is a funny word fail to realize all that is involved. These people want to have no commitment, make no promises, and so have no trust, no honesty, no ties, no faith, no pledge given to anyone. Those are a few of the things involved in "no fidelity." The cry is "freedom!" A woman may then say: "You can't steal me because I don't belong to anyone. In a practical sense this is parallel to the cry for no-fault insurance, no-fault abortions, no-fault homosexuality, and the latest one, no-fault divorce. At this rate, Western man will soon be able to use the Mohammedan custom, where he simply says to the woman he is tired of, "I divorce you." When he has repeated that statement three times, the woman is divorced. He can then run to take another woman, younger and more voluptuous, to make up his allowed quota of four wives. Why not, if "fidelity"

is a funny word?"

With such blatant amoral ideas propagated in our society, is it any wonder that our cities are filled with men and women just "living together?" If you knock on a few doors, and ask the young man who answers, "May I speak to your wife," he may well say, "She isn't my wife. We are just sharing the same suite in this high-rise apartment, where anyone can be anonymous." The answer will probably be given in an unperturbed, and unashamed manner. A photographer in the city of Calgary notes that, to his surprise, some such couples even come to have their "wedding" picture taken, minus the wedding.

The tragedy is that these young people are unable to fully trust anyone, and never find one who will trust them. Pledging fidelity to nobody, they find nobody will ever be faithful to them. The end of it is a certain, overwhelming loneliness, a final state of being "no longer wanted." Yet, even under these "free" conditions, it is still possible for a man to steal a woman from another man. That will produce a fearful jealousy, hatred, and sometimes even a gruesome murder. Read all about it in the next newspaper!

This is a reversion to jungle life, and often ends in jungle fights. Those who trust nobody will find nobody trusting them. Those who show fidelity to nobody will find none given in return. It is no surprise that young men and women are finding life meaningless. Without faith, true love, and honest commitment, life is just that. Real living is impossible without trust, fidelity, or commitment to our fellow humans, especially in the closest and most intimate relationship of all, the mutual life of a man and woman. For lack of these vital elements, some opt out of society, and some, despairing and disillusioned, end it all.

God has the cure. The clearcut seventh commandment is this: "Thou shalt not commit adultery." That means anything that breaks the fidelity of a man to a woman. It refers to anyone who steals a woman who, through true marriage, belongs to another by pledged troth, love, faith and commitment; the precious essentials basic to marriage. The positive side of this commandment is: "Thou shalt be pure and faithful." This is quite different from the self-living sex-pot who is destined to end up as a rejected, shop-worn rag on the garbage heap of humanity with nobody caring for him. God knows that humanity needs the fidelity of one to one. Life without that must inevitably turn into a hell and a horror.

What does God mean by "adultery"? Its interpretation throughout Scripture includes any violation of fidelity to another in matters pertaining to the sexual realm. In that violation, such things as lying, cheating, oath-breaking, concealment and evasion, total loss of confidence and mutual trust, and with it love joy and peace are inevitably involved. It means the smash of the marriage and home, and irreparable damage to the family and the character of the children.

Both legal and moral definitions of adultery exist today. In the legal sense, taking a new partner before the person has got rid of the old one



is adultery. To the law, this is not morally wrong, but only illegal, for the law must protect children, and define the rights and obligations of a husband and wife. The law says that taking a new partner is right if a person has the right pieces of paper, one saying that there has been a legal divorce, and another stating that there has been a recognized marriage service. If these are in the person's possession, everything is in order, legally.

The morality of adultery is another matter. It is at this point that God has something to say; "Thou shalt not commit adultery." He meant that this should include every sex perversion, every lust, every dirty and every unclean act or thought, and every shade of lasciviousness or fornication, lesbianism and homosexuality. God does not countenance the progressive adultery involved in divorce and remarriage. "Whosoever shall put away his wife, and marry another, committeth adultery against her." (Mark 10:11) Our Lord went even farther than this. "Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery; but I say unto you, that whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart." That's serious! Is any man wholly guiltless? Is any woman without the guilt of provocation of men by looks, gestures and dress, or the lack of it? Miniskirts and bikinis do not discourage mental adultery. A man's eyes and a woman's body are both involved, producing man's sin of lust, and woman's sin of temptation. A woman may say or think, "That's the way to get a man," without realizing that what she gets is a lecherous, sex-crazed fool who will chase after the next sexy chick he sees when he's tired of her! While this leads to momentary pleasure, it also leads to the wreck of homes, the end of love, and endless loneliness.

Even after all this evidence, people may still ask, "Why is adultery wrong? Why can't we accept a free love situation, unmarried cohabitation and any perversion appealing to a person? Why be so narrow? Why can't we have anyone we want, legally if possible, but if not, by some other means? That's what it's all about today. Why not get as much as we can, and give as little as possible? Don't some psychiatrists say that we have to have sex to keep sane? Don't today's books, magazines, films, radio and TV all tell us that erotic love is the real meaning of life? Who are you, preacher-man to deny all this? What authority do you have?" The answer is simple. There is a better book than any other which tells us the absolute truth, and in that Book, God says that adultery is wrong. He said that because He knows how adultery hurts people, and He loves people. This inflexible rule was given for our good.

Secondly, it is wrong because man knows it's wrong. He knows it deep inside his heart. Anyone with an operating conscience has a deep sense of guilt if he violates this law. If a man has no such conscience, he has sunk below the truly human level to that of the beast of the field. People may steal because of hunger and justify it. They may even kill, and justify it by some means. But the heart of man can not justify adultery. It is a self-lust, stealing a woman for self-gratification. David knew what conscience was after his adultery with Bathsheba. In Psalm

51, we read his agonized cry to God: "I acknowledge my transgressions and my sin is ever before me... against thee and thee only have I sinned and done this evil in thy sight."

Thirdly, adultery is wrong because, like the sowing of an evil seed, it always brings further wrong. Sorrow is a wound, but it is a clean wound and will heal. This sin is an unclean wound that will not heal. It distorts all of life, weakens the will power, sets up an inner conflict and takes away peace of mind. It is a killer. It takes away the whole bloom of happy life.

Fourthly, adultery destroys the happiness of marriage, which is a beautiful, God-ordained thing. It can destroy future marriage, staining that once clean, wholesome and pure, God-inaugurated sex-power, built into human beings for the clean procreation of the race.

Fifthly, adultery is wrong because it is not a "love-way." It is not love, but lust because it is the pursuit of one's own pleasure with complete disregard for the needs, emotions, and the damage done to others. It begins with self-love. It ends in lovelessness and loneliness. The legalized swapping of partners is not love. It is still adultery in God's eyes.

Although this may sound harsh, negative and blunt, I believe it needs to be said, that some might be saved from a ruined life and the misery it entails. Christian marriage and a pure sex-life are not easy. But mankind has found that God is right. Legal marriage, together with spiritual marriage can be a mystical, God-blessed union that is ideal and beautiful. It cannot be enforced. Throwing stones will not help. Half of our people, at least are not aiming for a Christian marriage. They belong to the secular world, where the chief rule of morality is apparently this, "Don't get caught." Nobody can force people to live by a religion in which they do not believe.

These people can be helped. Did you notice that recurring word "loneliness" that was used? I have a responsibility to warn people, especially young people, that to make fidelity a funny word means that an hour will arrive when fidelity is dreadfully needed, and it will not be there. I say it again: the end of no commitment, no faithfulness, a "run-my-own-show" life, is that nobody will be faithful to you, nobody will trust you, and nobody will truly love you. That is the essence of loneliness.

I can help people by teaching fidelity of mind, body and soul to God first, and then to other people, by warning of the disaster of adultery, the stained sex-life, by setting a sane, wholesome and pure doctrine of proper sexual living before all that I can. This is God's way, the good way, the way of life.

John 8:1-11 records a beautiful story that might have been a dismal tragedy. What can be learned from it? The woman was guilty. She was condemned on the basis of a double standard (Where was the man, also taken in adultery with her?) The accusing crowd were all guilty, and they knew it. Conscience was at work. There was the uncondemning Saviour, although not the condoning Saviour. He was going to the

cross to pay, in His own blood, the penalty of that woman's sin, as He was to be spiked to a cross-beam like a vile criminal. He said to her, "Go, and sin no more. Don't do it again. Thou shalt not."

If we had been there, what would all this have meant to us? We would have been in the same crowd, as conscience said to us, "Guilty," If not in deed, then we would be found guilty in our thought-life. Let's bring this up to our moment. We are guilty, and worthy of condemnation. There is no hope anywhere for sinners like us. There is therefore only one in all the universe who has power to forgive sins, and to cleanse from all unrighteousness. That one is Jesus Christ, the Saviour, the Sin-bearer. "There is none other name under heaven, given among men, whereby we must be saved." He alone can do it, by virtue of His shed blood.

Is He acknowledged and welcomed as your Saviour? The promise is sure: "He that believeth on the son hath everlasting life." Let Him in, to cleanse and purify, to forgive all those horrible stinking sins of the flesh and mind. Let Him in to live His own pure life in you, so that there need be no more adultery, or filth, but Jesus only!

## CHAPTER EIGHT:

### THE THREE PHILOSOPHIES OF THE JERICHO ROAD

The title given to this eighth study will at once bring to mind one of the most vivid stories in the Bible. It is the story told by our Lord to a young Jewish lawyer, about a man who fell among thieves on the Jericho road. There is no better illustration of the various attitudes of men to the eighth rule that God gave on the thundering mountain of Sinai, a rule expressed in four mighty words, "Thou shalt not steal."

It is stated in stark simplicity and unmistakable clarity. Much is involved in what is meant by this important rule of human society. God said it. The laws of every land say it. The heart of every right minded person agrees with it. There must be no stealing. In fact, this law precedes Sinai by at least sixteen centuries, for it is found at the very beginning of human history. It is founded on the basic, primitive right of any person to possess things. Where possession is possible and right, stealing also becomes possible.

The right to own and the wrong to misappropriation form the very foundation of our economic society. God gave to every man the right to work, to earn, to save, and to possess. Adam was given a garden, as his own. Then, God said to Adam, concerning the created earth, "Have dominion over it. The whole earth was given to Adam and to those who descended from him. Adam legally owned every square foot of land on earth. Ever since, his progeny inherited his fallen nature, they have quarreled about most of it. The Psalmist realized this: "The heavens, even the heavens are the Lord's; but the earth hath he given to the children of men." (Psalm 115:16) The earth belongs to man. He ought to be content with it, and forget about trying to appropriate a piece of Mars or Venus.

By subtle trickery the Devil stole the earth from man's control. When Adam fell for Satan's deception, he did not realize that the offered "prize" of super-knowledge would cost him the ownership of the earth. Today Satan is called the "prince of this world." He will seek to retain that title until our Lord Jesus, the "last Adam," returns to dispossess him. This will be done by right of Calvary's purchase, where Jesus paid the redemption price in full. This price included not only the sin of mankind, but also the "field" which is the world.

If Jesus had not died to buy back what Adam had lost to Satan, he would be stealing (taking back by force) the world upon which the evil one had a valid claim. The redemption price had to be paid so that our Lord's return to reign over this earth would be no theft but a fully-paid-for repossession from the original thief. Even in this great cosmic matter, justice has to be done. The Bible denounces every imaginable form of theft, and upholds the right of proper ownership.



Much is involved in this question of stealing. There are two areas of serious trouble. The first concerns the matter of just possession. The second concerns the matter of stealing those possessions rightly held by another.

Numerous questions need to be considered. Who rightly owns anything? Who inherited it from Adam, the original owner? Can such a claim be substantiated, or do we own things by the permission of Satan the Usurper? Who rightly owns this continent of North America? Does prior occupancy give ownership? If so, does this mean that the Europeans stole this land from the Indians? That question is pertinent enough in our day. It is certain that some cheating and stealing went on, and that certain rights of the original occupants of this land were violated. This is flagrantly evident in regard to the Black Hills of South Dakota, which were given by treaty to the Indian folk until gold was discovered and the greed of men disinherited the Indian people. There have been plenty of similar stealings in Canada also.

Concerning the question of ownership, about all that we can set down as factual is that I have the God-given right to own what I have earned, or what has been freely given to me by another who has also, in a similar way, established the right of ownership. Even the virtue of saving money or goods is a very dangerous virtue, for I become responsible to God for every dollar or dollar's worth that I call my own. James 1:17 states it this way: "Every good gift, and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights." Possessions are a loan or trust from God. We hold them as His stewards for the very short time called the span of life. The rich young farmer boasted about what he owned, and planned to tear down his barns, build greater ones, and there bestow all his goods. But God said to him, "Thou fool; this night thy soul shall be required of thee: and then whose shall those things be?" His was a short ownership.

Ownership is a God-given right, and must be responsibly used for God. Owning wealth, or even making a fair profit is not theft, provided nobody is cheated, unfairly burdened, or defrauded. In I John 3:17 we read of believers who have "this world's goods" as a possession. John adds, however, that it must be properly used to alleviate the needs of our suffering fellowmen. Acts 5:4 tells us about Ananias, and of the land he properly owned and then sold. Peter said to him: "While it remained, was it not thine own? and after it was sold, was it not in thine own power?" The truth in these statements is overshadowed when we read that Ananias tried to cheat on the deal!

Sometimes, ownership is personal; sometimes, it is communal. The early Christians tried the communal plan for a time, but people like Ananias ruined it. Many in Israel try it today in the Kibbutzim system, with similar problems. In Old Testament days, ownership, especially ownership of land, was conditional. Every fifty years, in the Jubilee, all land returned to the original owner, all slaves were set free, and a new start was made. By this means no person could accumulate vast

holdings in perpetuity and drive the small farmer out. It seems clear, then, that even proper ownership needs to have some controls on it as a man can own too much.

The second question concerns the commandment, "Thou shalt not steal." There are many kinds of stealing. There is the easily recognized strong-arm type, such as robbery, banditry, mugging, purse snatching, or burglary. We know and condemn these kinds. There are, however, other ways of stealing. The inherent sinful tendency to steal is in the hearts of men. Some do it subtly by swindling, by bribing authorities, by lying about the goods they are selling, by false advertising, by stealing trash and by inflated prices. These things come from the greed of men, who will get and grab all they can. Naboth had his vineyard stolen from him by Jezebel through forgery and false accusation. Jesus drove the money-changers out of the Temple for two reasons. First, they were desecrating God's house; making it a place of merchandise when it should always have been a house of prayer. Second, they were cheating the worshippers by demanding high exchange rates for the temple shekel, and high prices for sacrifices warranted as clean. They were thieves. That is what Jesus really meant when He said: "My house is a house of prayer: but ye have made it a den of thieves."

The story of the Jericho road reveals three human philosophies. First there is the philosophy of the thieves who attacked the lone traveller, and took all he had. Their philosophy was: "What belongs to others belongs to me, and I will take it." That is the philosophy of any thief, whether strong-arm, cheat, fraud, embezzler, one who lives beyond his means, one who fails to give an honest day's work, or who spends a morning of coffee drinking, with short work breaks in between. It is true that the labourer is worthy of his hire, but it is also true that the employer is worthy of the pay he gives for it.

There are other ways of stealing. It is possible to steal a person's inner resources. Mark Twain, the famous author, did that to his wife. Twain, or Samuel Clemens by his right name, was an agnostic who became increasingly sour in his later years. He ridiculed his wife's religious faith until she gave it up. Then, when deep sorrow came into her life, Clemens said to her, "Livy, lean on your faith." She replied "I can't. I haven't any left." That statement shocked and haunted him to the end of his life. He had robbed her. He was a thief who had stolen the most valuable thing that she, or anyone else could possess. Similar crimes are perpetrated in many centres of so-called higher learning by ungodly teachers who deliberately ridicule and destroy the faith of young people. Often a man can be robbed of his reputation by some vindictive slander, and his life ruined the rebuy.

The second philosophy illustrated in this story is that of the priest and the Levite. They passed by on the other side of the wounded man. Their philosophy was this: "What belongs to me is mine, and I will keep it." In so doing, they robbed the man of the help they should have given.

Often we hear of people in trouble, a woman attacked on the public

street, abused, wounded, and even murdered, while those who see it shut their doors, lock them, pull down the window blinds, and mutter, "I'm not going to get involved." God's curse on all such unfeeling brutes who want to grab all they can for self, and never care or share. It is possible for a man to be a professing Christian, and yet live like that.

"I live for me" is the rule of his life. In so doing, he robs others of help, even of the opportunity to hear the Gospel message. He even robs God. We read it in Malachi 3:8, "Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me...in tithes and offerings." That is perhaps the worst robbery of all. It entails robbing both God and man of what is needed to carry on His work here on earth.

One more philosophy is illustrated for us, that of the compassionate Samaritan. His philosophy went something like this: "What belongs to me I hold as a steward of God, and I will share it with others." This is the true philosophy of the real Christian. John emphasized this philosophy when he wrote: "But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?" (I John 3:17) This applies to our money, and to whatever abilities, talents, spiritual gifts and opportunities God gives and sends our way. These are not really ours. They are God's investments in us. What return will He get on that investment?

The eighth commandment has its positive equivalent. "Thou shalt use thy possessions for God and man, under His direction, shared to His glory alone." That means full dedication of our material resources, service, and life itself to God, as His property, to be used by Him for the help of others.

Two matters ought to be remembered as we apply these principles to our lives. First, any stealing requires restitution. If any of us is conscious of theft in any realm, material, spiritual or psychological, let us go at once and put it right. "Pay what thou owest." Apologize where you should. In Luke 19 we find the story of Zacchaeus, the tax collector of Jericho, and how at last he gladly received the Lord Jesus. Then what? In verse 8, we read: "Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken anything from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold." No man has room for Christ and dishonest gains.

Secondly, remember that God will forgive a repentant thief. Our Lord died on a cross between two thieves. One cursed Him. The other turned repentantly to Him and asked for help. To him, Jesus said, "Verily I say unto thee, today shalt thou be with me in paradise." In that very hour our Saviour was pouring out His life's blood to pay for the sins of that thief, and for your sins, and for mine. Have you come to Him for the salvation He alone can give? Remember what He said: "He that climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber." Come by the door, by our Lord Jesus. Don't try to steal a way into heaven. The open door is there. Admission is bought at Calvary.

## CHAPTER NINE:

### PILATE ASKED A QUESTION--AND DIDN'T WAIT FOR AN ANSWER

Pilate's question has become famous for various, diverse reasons. He questioned God the Son with these words: "What is truth?" What he did next is most significant. "Pilate said unto him (Jesus), What is truth? And when he had said this, he went out again unto the Jews, and saith unto them, I find in him no fault at all." Pilate asked his question and didn't wait for the answer. He was talking to the only One on earth or in heaven who could have given him an adequate answer, but he ran away. His question hinted that there was no such thing as absolute truth. He followed the fashion of many skeptics of his day and ours. He was really afraid that there might be truth somewhere, and that he would have to face it, and what it revealed concerning his sin.

Discovering truth is not an easy thing. You may find grains of truth in the exact science of mathematics. For example, two and two can reasonably be expected to make four. But the more inexact sciences, the incomplete sciences such as biology, zoology, or geology are always in a state of change and flux. That which is today's truth is tomorrow's lie. In the speculative areas of theosophy, psychology, psychiatry, or anthropology, one person's guess may be as good as another's. Is there such a thing as truth, or is Pilate's inference right?

Did you ever wonder why, in a court of law, a person is required to take an oath in the name of God, to hold or kiss the Bible, the Word of God, and then swear to tell the "truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth?" This is done as the court tries to establish the true facts in the case before it. It has arisen because of one basic fact; that the Bible is the one Book of sacred, God-inspired truth. Our Lord Jesus could have completely answered Pilate's question, had Pilate been willing to wait for the answer.

The word "truth" is used 236 times in the Bible. Jesus, in His prayer to God the Father, said: "Thy word is truth." (John 17:17) In John 14:6, we read His words to Thomas, "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father but by me." Although the cynical psychologist or psychiatrist may cry, "There is no such thing as absolute truth," these facts will remain forever. The Bible is the truth. Jesus was and is the truth incarnate. Thus, anything or anyone who contradicts this Book, or the Word of God the Son is plainly a liar.

That is a strong statement, but a very serious matter is involved. God set this ninth rule before men for their good. It is an essential of human society. Without it there is no integrity, trust, fidelity, honesty or security. It is recorded in Exodus 20:16, "Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour." It is repeated in the New Testament. Our Lord quoted this to a rich young man. Paul quoted it to the church



at Rome. It has always been a basic essential of human society. It is needed as much today.

Man's laws agree with God's law, for perjury has always been reckoned as a miserable and heinous crime. The old Roman laws of the twelve tables decreed that a false witness against a man accused of a crime should receive the punishment of that crime. Again this was in agreement with God's law, and possibly copied from it. "If the witness be a false witness, and hath testified falsely against his brother; then shall ye do unto him as he had thought to have done to his brother. So shalt thou put the evil away from among you." (Deuteronomy 19:18-19) It was apparently thought to be a deterrent!

God completely abhors lying! In Proverbs 6:16-17, we read of six or seven things that the Lord hates. "Seven are an abomination to him." The first two mentioned are "a proud look, a lying tongue," and the sixth mentioned is this, "a false witness that speaketh lies." He who is the truth hates any form of lie. The denial of truth is a good beginning (or rather a bad beginning) for habitual lying. There is such a thing as truth, and that fact makes lying possible. Those who would deny the fact of truth do so to justify the fact of lying. Lying is impossible unless there is absolute truth.

The question of "white lies" becomes significant here. Would you tell a lie to save someone from threatening danger, from the attack of a murderer, or a rapist who may be seeking the whereabouts of a victim and ask you where such a person is? Is this form of situation ethics permissible? It has been used. Rebekkah arranged for her son Jacob to tell and act a lie. Rahab the harlot lied about the spies she had hidden. Yet all this was unnecessary. All that those people had to do was to keep their mouths shut, and God would certainly have worked out his will without their "help." We are not to bear false witness against anyone, with a vindictive attempt to harm them. The real sin of lying lies in the intent to harm another, thereby doing it "against thy neighbour."

What is the reason for lying? Of all the ten rules, we break this one the most. We do it because we talk mostly about people. Someone has said: "Great minds discuss ideas; mediocre minds discuss events; small minds discuss people." Whether or not this is wholly true, we do talk too much about our fellows, often to their detriment. We do it because it ministers to our pride. If we can dim the glitter of another's crown, we take the sting out of our failures. A sure sign of an inferiority complex is one person relating the faults of another. Gossip often comes because of jealousy, and scarcely anybody feels guilty about it. Commonly heard is this statement: "I don't mean to say anything nasty about him, but..." and off we go. Often we really enjoy talking about the sin of someone else because in a back-handed way we brag that we have not committed that sin.

We are required by law to tell the truth in the courtroom. Outside of court, there are many forms of false witness. Like this: "Isn't it too bad how Mr. \_\_\_\_\_ beats his wife? I feel so sorry for her." Often that is gossip in the form of sympathy. That is one of the devil's fav-

orite methods. In Job 1:9, we read Satan's words to God, "Doth Job serve God for nought?" That was a sly inference rather than a direct accusation, but it was intended to raise a suspicion regarding Job's integrity.

Our Lord's road to Calvary was lined with lying accusers and false witnesses. Matthew records that "...many false witnesses came... At the last came two false witnesses." (Matthew 26:60) and told their lies. Before that mock trial, our Lord had suffered in Gethsemane the lying kiss of Judas. Do you think that telling a few lies doesn't really matter?

Furthermore, we take part in lying gossip just by listening to it. There can be no voice without an ear to receive it, or an eardrum to vibrate in sympathy with it. The law holds the receiver of stolen goods as guilty as the thief. When someone tries to pass gossip on to you, he insults you, because he thinks you are ready to receive and believe it. The remedy is to tell him to go and peddle his garbage elsewhere.

Talebearing is not harmless? In Matthew 7:1-2 we read our Lord's words, "Judge not, that ye be not judged. For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged." That ought to scare and drive us to our knees. Don't you want God to be kinder to you than you have been to others, or will you be satisfied and happy to receive equal treatment? Will Rogers once said: "So live that you would not be ashamed to sell the family parrot to the town gossip."

Regarding the sin of lying, the injunction in the Scriptures is this: "Resist the devil." Our society is surrounded by lies and liars. We read the lies of false advertising and salesmanship, told to make money out of us. The lies of the gossip abound, tending to make us all into haters. The lies of the politicians are told to get power over us. The lies of journalistic scribblers are written to delude us. Their pay is bigger now, and so are their lies. What the astrologer claims to see in the stars has a way of lining the pockets of the astrologer. Resist all of them. Christ's fiercest wrath was given to hypocrites. Ananias' lying cost him his life, and the never-dying contempt of all humanity.

Pierre Van Passen writes a pitiful story in his book, THE DAYS OF OUR YEARS. It is the story of Ugolin, a sick, crippled boy and his sister, Solange. Left in deep poverty, with no resources, Solange sold her body on the street to get money for medicine for Ugolin. The neighbouring people who had failed to help the needy youngsters began gossiping the awful tale of Solange's immorality. Ugolin, filled with despair as the stories and whispers filtered back, at last drowned himself. Later, Solange shot herself. Many people came to the funerals, some from morbid curiosity.

The minister stood to speak. "Christians!" (the word was like a whiplash) "Christians! When the Lord of life and death shall ask me on the day of judgment, 'Where are thy sheep?' I shall not answer Him. When the Lord asks me a second time, 'Where are thy sheep?' I will yet not answer Him. But when the Lord asks me a third time, 'Where

are thy sheep?' I shall hang my head in shame, and I will answer him, 'They were not sheep, Lord; they were a pack of wolves.'

Here is a different story I heard. Jim was considered to be the bad boy of the community. In school he was blamed for almost any trouble that came along. But a new teacher came to the school. In due course, something went wrong, and as usual Jim was blamed by the others. The teacher called, "Jim," and he stood up, expecting the usual beating. But the teacher said, "Now, let Jim tell his side." Upon hearing this, Jim began to cry. "What's the matter, Jim?" asked the surprised teacher. Said Jim, "This is the first time anybody ever said I had a side." There is always another side. Seek it, quietly and prayerfully lest you bear some false witness against a neighbour.

The first truth any man ought to face is the truth about himself. Too many try to tell lies in that area. In I John 1:6 we read: "If we say that we have fellowship with him (God) and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth." Verse 8 says, "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." God make us willing to tell the truth when we talk to Him. "I have sinned. I need redemption, cleansing, and forgiveness. Lord Jesus, you can do it, because of your blood shed as the sin price. Please do it now!" He will do it. He will set us on the path of truth, in thought, word and deed, and save us from "bearing false witness against a neighbour."

## CHAPTER TEN:

### HOW CAN WE CURE A MOTH-EATEN HEART?

A surgeon, examining a human body, has never found such a thing as a moth-eaten heart. Our Lord Jesus did. He said this: "Lay not up for yourselves treasure upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal." By that, He meant that the selfish, self-seeking, covetous man will contract a heart that is moth-eaten and rusty, and that is stolen away from the worship of God. Then He added these words: "Where your treasure is (among the moths and the rust) there will your heart be also." In one of his books, Dr. Tozer wrote: "Never set your heart on anything that will rust, rot, burn or die." The reason is obvious, isn't it?

Note carefully what Dr. Tozer said: "Never set your heart..." on these things. That does not mean that it is wrong to have any material possessions. Jesus ate food and wore clothes, even though He never owned real estate, a Cadillac, or even a boat. He accepted the anointing of ointment, brought Him by a woman. Just so, today, the workman has to have his axe, the carpenter his hammer and saw, the farmer his plough, the stenographer her typewriter, the missionary aviation pilot his plane, the housewife her pots and pans, and the baker, his oven. None of these can give a person a moth-eaten heart when they are used correctly. That disease comes from another source.

It is not easy to set out the true Christian position regarding this matter of worldly goods. Some paradoxical things are involved. Worldly goods are good things, provided by the providence of God, to be used and enjoyed by men and women. If we have them, the very best use of them is to give them away. If we do not have them, we should expect to receive them as God's promised supply of all our needs, and not worry while waiting for them to arrive. The Lord told us to pray, "Give us this day our daily bread," and yet also said that "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Father." Jesus also said, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you." Goods are good. Our Lord used some of them, bread and wine, as the very symbols of His sacrificial love for us. They are good symbols. What then is it that gives men a moth-eaten heart?

The last rule of the Ten declares this in crystal-clear fashion, and issues its solemn warning against the dread disease. It is given in Exodus 20:17, "Thou shalt not covet." The word "covet" means "to grasp for more," like a child seizing the extra piece of candy, or like the mortgage holder foreclosing on the poor neighbour's farm.

Much is covered in the wording of this commandment. "Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house." That is relevant today! You may not

be able to actually seize his house, but what happens in your heart when you see the latest model home, or when you visit a friend in his new house?

"Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife." This is very relevant today. Who dares to deny it? In this sex-mad age, with its lax morals and uncontrolled lust, this thing goes on more and more. God still says, "Thou shalt not." Let every man remember what marriage bonds are: God's sacred institution. Let every neighbouring wife take care that she does not tempt the man next door by word, gesture, suggestion, or by flesh exposure.

"Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's manservant or maidservant." Those would represent today's status symbols. The neighbour can afford to hire servants. He has a new car, and a big television set. He has a swimming pool in the backyard, and a cottage, and speed-boat at the lake. Do you covet what he has?

"Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's ox, or his ass." Today's equivalent would be his farm, with the fine machinery on it that provides the "ox-power" or the "ass-power" listed today as so many units of "horse-power." It may mean his business, his factory or his shop.

"Thou shalt not covet anything that is thy neighbour's." That means his total possessions, earned by his own labours. This rule literally covers everything in our modern life, and declares in stringent tones, "Thou shalt not covet."

What does "covet" mean? Desire is not necessarily sin. God says, "Covet earnestly the best gifts." It is right to covet freedom from toil and slavery, to covet victory over sin, to covet opportunities to do good to all men, to help the poor, the sick and the suffering, and to win lost men to Christ. But the covetousness to be shunned is to live thinking of myself, and what I can get for me, even if I have to scheme some way to take it from the one who has what I want. It often leads to the other sins of theft, lying, adultery and even murder in order to get what the coveting heart desires. The sin is committed without the deed itself. As soon as the heart conceives this self-lust, it becomes moth-eaten. He who lives for self cannot live for God or for his fellow men. Without this rule in operation, the other nine become impossible to fulfill. This rule is where it belongs, at the end, to sum up all the others.

The rule is unique. The other nine deal with specific actions. This one deals with a state of the mind and heart, apart from any action that may result from it. It speaks of the rotten core of a sinful soul. It tells us that wrong actions proceed from wrong ideas, goals, and standards. Because such a condition exists, our modern nations are going downhill rapidly. The great sin of men and nations today is greed, another word for covetousness. Although usually unrebuked and forbidden by law, it is overwhelming mankind. It is everywhere anchored deep in the human heart. Man is taught from his youth up to greedily grasp for more. He thinks that if he has enough things, money, electric power, nuclear power and technology, he will be back in Paradise. Life becomes

one great rat-race, with the winning rat getting more cheese than his fellow rats.

Yet, there is a strange perversity in life. Something has gone wrong in this world, causing man to gain everything except the contentment and happiness he is looking for. No matter how much a covetous person gets, he always wants more, and is constantly discontented. Eventually, after covetousness drives him unmercifully through life, it kills him and leaves him with nothing. If great wealth brought happiness, the Jews would never have needed this law. They had a land flowing with milk and honey. The danger came precisely when they were affluent. Read the warning in Deuteronomy 8. In our affluent days, we live in a discontented society. We are still like *Oliver Twist*, holding up our bowl and asking for more.

This disease of greed is the root trouble in our society. Paul said this, "I have learned in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content." How many people live like that today? Again he said this, "Having food and raiment let us therewith be content." And in Hebrews 13:5 we read: "Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee nor forsake thee." Covetousness and contentment can never live together. They are opposites. There is a great gulf between the pattern of life that is the right and happy way, and the way that is wrong, the way to continuing misery. When we covet, we make ourselves miserable by what we do not have, instead of gaining the blessed thrill of giving what we can give. Paul quoted our Lord's words like this: "It is more blessed to give than to receive."

The Lord Jesus summed up the Ten Commandments in two parts. The first part was, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind." (Matthew 22:37, 39) Love fulfills God's requirements. The other part was this: "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." Love, not lust or covetousness, is the only way. God would have us forget ourselves, and think of what we can give to others. God help us to get something into our mind that is bigger than we are, and thus lose ourselves in following that goal.

God not only gave the rule, but illustrated it again and again. David looked upon another man's wife, Bathsheba, and coveted her. The prophet Nathan came to him with the story of the rich man who spared his own flocks, and took the poor man's ewe lamb to feed his guest. As David burned with indignation against such a man, Nathan said to him, "Thou art the man." (Perhaps, if we wax indignant against the greed of today, God will point his finger at us and say, "Thou art the man." Let us search our own hearts.) Again we read of a certain rich man who came to Christ, apparently seeking the way to eternal life. Something was in his way. Jesus said, "Sell out. Sell all thou hast, and give to the poor." He went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions. That was not his basic sin. Those possessions had him. He was in the grip of selfishness and covetousness. Paul says, "...covetousness, which is idolatry." The covetous man literally worships his possessions



and forgets the God who gave them to him, that he might use them well as a true and faithful steward. Certainly covetousness sends many to hell, and ruins many a Christian's life.

Isn't it amazing that God still sends the sunshine and the rain upon this covetous world? The people of Israel love to tell a story about the visit of the Queen of Sheba to the court of King Solomon. Two men came before the king quarrelling about a treasure found in a field. But there was a strange twist to their quarrel. The man who had bought the field claimed that the treasure was not his, because he had bought the field only. The man who sold the field claimed that the treasure now belonged to the man who had bought the field. This was the opposite of covetousness. King Solomon settled the issue by suggesting that the son of the one man marry the daughter of the other one, and that they give the treasure to the newly-weds. The Queen of Sheba marvelled at this. "In my country," she said, "Each man would want the treasure for himself. They would covet it." "And what would you do about it?" asked Solomon. She replied, "I would cut off their heads, and take the treasure for myself." Then Solomon said, "Have you any pets in your country?" "Oh, yes," she replied. And Solomon said, "Ah, I can see why God still sends you the sunshine and the rain." He inferred, of course, that covetous people do not deserve the favour of God, and He only sent His provision to maintain the life of dumb animals.

Solomon's conclusion was not totally correct. Jesus said that God sends the rain on the just and the unjust, because of His love for mankind. Only the grace of God continues to give life and daily provision to a covetous, greedy mankind.

Here are a few important facts. It is a fact that we shall all part with our goods. To another rich man, Jesus said, "Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee. Then whose will those things be?" Have you faced that squarely? Our civilization, with all its wealth will not last forever. It will smash to pieces.

It is a fact that man cannot remedy our social ills, for the sickness is deep within the hearts of all men, including the politicians themselves. Watch the covetous politician fight for power. It is a fact that all men have an inner bent to covetousness, it is part of the old sinful nature, even in the Christian.

What is the cure for a moth-eaten heart, a sinning heart? How can a person cease to be covetous? How can a man receive a new state of mind? Jesus gave us the answer in one word, "love." He did not mean some sloppy sentimentality, or an emotional surge. He meant genuine heart love. He began it this way: "God so loved the world that He gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." It must begin there. When we yield our hearts to that love, and to the Saviour God sent to redeem us, He indwells us with His own loving self. He cleanses us, puts new life within, His perfect life, and generates in us true love for Him, and for others, so enabling us to fulfill the ten rules. For the rest of that life,

He simply lives out in our lives all the glorious principles. The way to stop covetousness is to want God so much, to want the best for our fellowmen so much, that we can't be bothered with inordinate wants for anything else.

Can you sing that old song, "My Jesus, I love Thee; I know Thou art mine. For Thee all the follies of sin I resign." He kept all the rules. He was without sin. He can live that same life through us, as we yield our bodies, our souls, our minds and our spirits to Him.





PUBLISHED BY BEREAN BIBLE COLLEGE,  
CALGARY, ALBERTA, JULY, 1973