

50. The Ten Commandments.

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom; a good understanding have all they that do His commandments. His praise endureth forever. *Ps. 111, 10.*

The Ten Commandments are the holy will of God, or the divine Law. Can you imagine a more perfect law than one framed by God? The Law of God is perfect in that it covers all our obligations. All our duties are named in the two tables of the Decalog. The First Table comprises the first three Commandments, telling us our duty to God; it looks up and down. The Second Table, comprising the last seven Commandments, looks right and left, telling us our duty to our neighbor. The First Table teaches piety; the Second Table teaches probity. The First Table teaches the right creed; the Second Table teaches the right life.

Every phase of life, every case of conscience, every motive of action, is taken into account in the Law of God. Nothing in it is superfluous; nothing is wanting. True, much is commanded that was meant only for the Jews. And now, after the Jewish state is ended and Christ has come and the foreshadowings have been fulfilled, those special laws, have lost their significance and are no longer binding. But it is altogether different with what God tells us in the Ten Commandments: how we are to be and what we are to do or not to do. This He also commands in the New Testament, which is written for all men without any exception.

Yea, this Law is by nature written in every man's heart, though not the very *words* of the Ten Commandments, yet their sense and meaning. This is the natural Moral Law, which every man, as it were, knows of himself. Also the heathen, who have not the written Law, the Ten Commandments, know what according to the Ten Commandments is right or wrong in the sight of God. In consequence of sin, however, this knowledge of the Law is much obscured, and in some men there is very little left of it. When, therefore, God chose the children of Israel to be the people of His covenant and to serve Him according to His pleasure, He was not satisfied with the remainder of this knowledge of the Law, but declared His holy will to all men in the Ten Commandments.

Prayer.

O almighty, holy, and righteous God, we humbly beseech Thee that Thou wouldst, for the sake of the perfect obedience of Thy dear Son, graciously forgive us our manifold sins wherewith we have broken Thy holy Law and provoked Thy just indignation against us. Give us ever by Thy Law a due sense of our sins and by Thy Gospel the confident assurance that for the sake of the merits of Christ our sins will be forgiven, and that Thy strength will be made perfect in our weakness. May it please Thee to graft in our hearts true obedience, that we may delight in Thy Law after the inward man and serve Thee in newness of spirit. May we love Thee, O God, above all things and our neighbor as ourselves, not in word only, but in truth. Amen.

No service in itself is small,
None great, though earth it fill;
But that is small which seeks its own
And great which seeks God's will.

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You may contact Rev. Ley at: pastorley@leychalet.com.

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