

WESTMINSTER CONFESSION OF FAITH

SHORTER CATECHISM

LESSON # 39 (Q3LES13) - THOU SHALT NOT COVET....

1. **Prayer**
2. **Bible reading: 1 Corinthians 13: 1 - 13**
3. **Review:** At our last meeting, we covered the ninth commandment, which is ***Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor.*** This commandment is covered in SC questions 76 through 78. We learned that the ninth commandment deals with bearing false witness, which means basically, lying. We also learned that lying can be injurious to our own and our neighbors good name, and that we should take special care not only to avoid harming our own and our neighbor's good name, but to promote a good name for both.
3. **Introduction:** This week we will look at the tenth commandment. The tenth commandment is covered in questions 79 through 81 of the SC, and deals with coveting. Again, it is a "Thou shalt not" commandment. As the pastor has said many times, this commandment is the Lord telling us that we are going to do it His way, and we may as well like it.

4. **Questions & Answers:**

Question 79: Which is the tenth commandment?

Answer: The tenth commandment is, ***thou shalt covet thy neighbor's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbors wife, nor his manservant, nor his maid-servant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing that is thy neighbors.***

Question 80: What is required in the tenth commandment?

Answer: The ninth commandment requireth full contentment with our own condition, with a right and favorable frame of spirit toward our neighbor, and all that is his.

Question 81: What is forbidden in the tenth commandment?

Answer: The tenth commandment forbiddeth all discontentment with our own estate, envying or grieving at the good of our

neighbor, and all inordinate motions and affections to anything that is his.

5. The SC, LC and WCF?

- a. The SC and the LC both cover this commandment in three questions, the SC in questions 79, 80, & 81, the LC in questions 146, 147, & 148. In this case, the SC and the LC are very similar, with very little expansion of the answers. Both are in agreement with each other. For this commandment, I could not find any specific direction in the WCF.

6. General

- a. Thou shalt not covet. What is “to covet”? Anyone like to take a shot at “covet”?

My Webster’s New 20th Century Dictionary defines “covet” as “to desire inordinately; to long for (that which another person has). So this commandment is telling us that we should not inordinately desire, or long for anything which our neighbor has. If we can do that, we will be satisfied with what God has given us. If not, we will covet.

7. Full contentment with our own condition....

- a. **Hebrews 13:5** is a very comforting verse. It says’s ***“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.”*** TV says of contentment with our own condition: *“Contentment with our own condition doth consist in our free acquiescence and complacency with God’s disposal of us, whereby we like our present condition, as best, and most fit for us.”*

Note here, contentment does not, in this case, mean complacency.

- b. TV discusses contentment from two points of view, prosperous and poor.
- c. TV has a long discussion of ways we can be content with our condition if we are prosperous. This doesn’t sound too difficult, but it seems as if many that thinks they have everything, lack some of the most important things, like happiness. He makes some good points on how these people may obtain. Let’s look at some of the things he has to say.
 - By not setting our hearts too much on, nor expecting too much from, any of these things. (**Psalm 62:10** ***“If riches increase, set not your heart upon them.”***)

How many rich do not covet being richer, how many worship the wrong god?

- By placing our chief happiness in God and things above; and chiefly seeking to enjoy God in the good things which we have. (**Psalm 16:5 - 6** *“⁶The Lord is the portion of mine inheritance and of my cup: thou maintainest my lot. ⁷The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places; yea, I have a good heritage.”*)

Remember SCq1? How many people look to God, not their material wealth, for happiness?

- By readiness to distribute to the necessities of others, which is accompanied with God’s love and blessing, who giveth the greatest comfort in these things unto such. (**2 Cor 9: 7 – 8** *“⁽⁷⁾God loveth a cheerful giver. ⁽⁸⁾And God is able to make all grace abound towards you, that ye always, having all sufficiency in all things, may abound unto every good work.”*)

Think about this. Are you too rich to tithe?

- By prayer, and seeking to God through Christ for this grace of contentment, without which the more we have in the world, the more our desires after increases will be enlarged, and the less we shall be satisfied.

Boy does this sound tough!

d. But even tougher, how is it possible to be content with your condition when you are poor or afflicted?

- By getting an interest, and trusting in God’s promise, to cause all things, even the worst things that can befall us, to work together for our good. (**Rom 8:28** *“And we know that all things work together for good, to them that love God, to them who are the called, according to his purpose.”*)

Does not mean accepting all bad things as God’s will. Sometimes God is telling us **we** need to do something about the condition. (If you are overweight, quit eating.) Remember, contentment does not mean complacency.

- By humility, and a deep sense of our undeserving and ill-deserving at God’s hands for our sins. (**Gen 32:10** *“I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies, and of all the truth, which thou hast showed unto thy servant;”*)

This puts things in perspective. Is it possible God is giving us what we deserve?

- By looking to others better than ourselves, who have been lower in the world, and more afflicted than we have been. **(Our Savior had not where to lay his head; and those of whom the world was not worthy had no certain dwelling place in the world, and many of them destitute, afflicted, and tormented.)**

You often do not have to look very far to find someone worst off than ourselves.

- By considering how we brought nothing into the world, and that we can carry nothing with us out of it. **(Job 1:21 “Naked came I out of my mothers womb, and naked shall I return thither.”)**

You can't take it with you.

- By going to Christ to teach us the lesson of universal contentment, and fetching strength from him to exercise this grace in every condition. **(Philippians 4: 11 – 13 “¹¹Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. ¹²I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. ¹³I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.”)**

8. All discontentment with our own estate....

- a. We are forbidden to have discontentment with our own estate. What are the causes of discontentment with our own estate?
 - From our not believing or not trusting in the providence of God, who orders every particular circumstance of our estate and condition, and hath promised to order it for the best. **(Matt 10: 29 – 31 “²⁹Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? And one of them shall not fall on the on the ground without your Father.³⁰But the very hairs on your head are numbered. ³¹Fear ye not therefore, ye are of more value than many sparrows.”)**

Remember, God is in charge.

- From pride and **overvaluing ourselves**, as if we had some desert of our own, and such high thoughts, as if it were fit that such worthy persons as we are should be in a better condition than that wherein God hath placed us.
- From a carnal heart, filled with inordinate selflove; which, if God's providence doth not gratify with full provisions for the flesh, it doth vex and grieve, and is disquieted.

- From inordinate affections unto, and expectations of and from, these outward things, **which causeth inordinate grief and trouble in the loss of these things**, and great discontent in the disappointment of what we expected of them, and from them.
- b. What is the sum of all these duties required and sins forbidden? God will do what is best for us, according to his will.
- 9. with a right and favorable frame of spirit toward our neighbor, and all that is his.** So far we have dealt with ourselves. What about our neighbor?
- a. What is a right and charitable frame of spirit toward our neighbor, and all that is his?
- Our affections of love, desire, and delight, towards and in our neighbor, and his welfare; together with grief and sorrow with and for our neighbor's evil and sufferings. **(Rom 12: 10, 15 ⁽¹⁰⁾Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honor preferring one another;⁽¹⁵⁾Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep.**)
- b. How can we attain such affections and dispositions toward our neighbor?
- By getting the law of God written in our hearts, whereby we are brought into a love of the law, and to an inclination to do it. **(Heb 8:10 *"I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts."*)**
 - By getting our affections chiefly set upon God, which will incline unto any right affections one towards another. **(1 John 5: 1 *"Whosoever believeth that Jesus is born of God: and every one that loveth him that begat loveth him also that is begotten of him."*)**
 - By faith in Jesus Christ, which worketh the heart both to a true love to God and towards one another. **(Gal 5:6 *"For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love."*)**
 - By looking unto, and following the example of Jesus Christ. **(Eph 5:2 *"and walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweetsmelling savor."*)**
- 10. Envy or grieving at the good or our neighbor.**
- a. What is envy? TV says: *"Envy is a grief at another's good, when the parts and gifts of the mind, or strength and beauty of the body, or the wealth and outward prosperity, or the esteem and honor, or any good thing which another hath, more than ourselves, is a grief or trouble unto us."* **(Psalm 112: 9 – 10 ⁽⁹⁾his horn shall be exalted with honor. ⁽¹⁰⁾The wicked shall see it, and be grieved; he**

shall gnash with his teeth and melt away: the desire of the wicked shall perish.”)

- b. how can we be delivered from envy?
- By conviction of it's evil, and hearty grief for it.
 - By application of the blood of Christ through faith, for the cleansing of our hearts from it. **(1 John 1:7 “*But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.*”)**
 - By cordial love and charity towards our neighbor. **(1 Cor 13:4 “*Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up.*”)**
 - By the indwelling of the Spirit, through whom alone this sin can be mortified and subdued. **(Rom 8:13 “*...but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.*”**

11. Any inordinate motions and affections to anything that is his..

- a. This is the basis of coveting. TV says: *“the special inordinate motion and affection which is forbidden in this commandment, is coveting that which is our neighbor's, either his house, or wife, or man servant, or maid servant, or ox, or ass, or any thing that is his.”*

12. SUMMARY

- a. The study of the tenth commandment concludes our study of God's law. Remember, these ten commandments are God's law, not his ten suggestions. They reflect God's revealed will toward us, His direction. As we end our study of God's law, it is worth remembering what is said in **(Matt 22: 37 – 40 “⁽³⁷⁾Jesus said unto him, *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.* ⁽³⁸⁾*This is the first and great commandment.* ⁽³⁹⁾*And the second is like unto it, thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.* ⁽⁴⁰⁾*On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.*”)**