

Christian Stewardship

Exodus 20:15

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Reformed Witness Hour

(www.reformedwitnesshour.org)

Station Listings

Station	Location	Frequency	Time/day
KARI	Blaine, WA.....	550AM.....	8:00 P.M./Sunday
KCWN	Pella, IA.....	99.9FM.....	3:30 P.M./Sunday
KDCR	Sioux Center, IA.....	88.5FM.....	5:00 P.M./Sunday
KGDN	Tri-Cities Walla Walla, OR.....	101.3FM.....	5:00 P.M./Sunday
KLOH	Pipestone, MN.....	1050AM.....	8:00 A.M./Sunday
KLTT	Denver, CO.....	670AM.....	1:30 P.M./Sunday
KPRO	Riverside, CA.....	1570AM.....	11:30 A.M./Sunday
KSPO	Spokane, WA.....	106.5FM.....	5:00 P.M./Sunday
KTAC	Moses Lake, WA.....	93.9FM.....	5:00 P.M./Sunday
KTBI	Wenatchee/Moses Lake, WA.....	810AM.....	5:00 P.M./Sunday
KTRW	Spokane, WA.....	630AM.....	9:30 A.M./Sunday
KYAK	Yakima, WA.....	930AM.....	5:00 P.M./Sunday
WFDL	Fond Du Lac, WI.....	1170AM.....	8:00 A.M./Sunday
WFUR	Grand Rapids, MI.....	102.9FM.....	8:00 A.M./Sunday
WFUR	Grand Rapids, MI.....	1570AM, 92.9FM ...	4:00 P.M./Sunday
	NYC-Long Island, NY.....	101.5FM, 94.9FM, 104.5FM, 96.5FM ...	8:30 A.M./Sunday
WORD	Pittsburgh, PA.....	101.5FM.....	10:00 A.M./Sunday
WPGF	Carlisle, PA.....	91.3FM.....	8:00 A.M./Sunday
UK			
GOSPEL	Northern Ireland.....	846AM.....	8:30 A.M./Sunday
Canada			
CKNX	Wingham, ON.....	920 AM.....	7:00 A.M./Sunday

THE REFORMED WITNESS HOUR

April 2, 2017
No. 3874

Christian Stewardship
Rev. Rodney Kley

Dear radio friends,

Today we consider the eighth commandment of the law of God as we find that in Exodus 20:15. These words, “Thou shalt not steal.” This brief commandment speaks to two things. First, the love of the neighbor by respecting the possessions that God has given to him; and second, the proper use of the things that God has given to me, which I call my possessions. It addresses our day-to-day life in the world of commerce and personal finances. It deals with work and income and the spending of that income.

However, behind this commandment are several important principles that have to do with God and His position in relation to the things of this material world. Before we get to the application of this commandment, we want to look at those principles.

The first principle is this: that God is the owner of all things. Psalm 24:1 and 2 puts it this way: “The earth is the LORD’s, and the fullness thereof.” Then it gives the reason: “For he hath founded it upon the seas, and established it.” God is the creator and, because He is the

sovereign creator of all things, He is also the possessor, the owner of all things. Haggai 2:8 says: “The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, saith the LORD.” That should have a profound, life-changing effect on our view of the material world and our place in this material world. Everything in this life belongs to God. He has ownership rights of all things. That makes us stewards of the things that God owns. We have responsibilities. But as we possess those things, we must answer to God. Every financial decision relates back to God and is spiritual. There is nothing hid from the eyes of God. He sees not only what we do but also all our desires. Our financial records and the way that we use the things that God has given to us really tell a story. They are a spiritual biography that is open to the eyes of God.

The implication also is this, that we live by faith in this material world. This material world is not the be-all and the end-all for the child of God, but we live by faith, believing that God is the One who owns all things. So we live before Him.

The second important prin-

ciple is that God is the distributor of wealth. Proverbs 22:2 says of the rich and the poor that the Lord is the maker of them both. I Samuel 2:7 says that He makes rich and He makes poor.

I Corinthians

4:7 says that anything that we have, we have received from God.

That means that if we have

wealth or if we have possessions, we have not achieved them or attained by our own strength or our own ability. God, rather, gives to us the opportunities and the talents and the privileges and the education by which we are able to acquire these things. We must not squander those opportunities that God gives to us. But, in the end, God is the One who makes rich and who makes poor.

This teaches us two important things. The first is that how much or how little we have is not the important thing. And we must not judge a person by how much or how little he has. Rather, what God demands is faithfulness. He demands that we answer to Him and be faithful with what He has given to us. He does not demand success but faithfulness.

The other important thing that this teaches us is that we must trust His provision—not

panic, but depend on Him from day to day with regard to our earthly things.

The third principle is this, that God has an ultimate purpose with our earthly things.

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The ultimate purpose with regard to money and possessions is not you, it is not me. It is not

our prosperity, it is not our success. Rather, it is God's glory. You and I must ask the question: Why do we labor, why do we work? Why do we seek money in this life? Is it just for food? Is it just for health? Is it just for my advancement? Is it just for my earthly needs? It cannot be. If it was only for those things that relate to me, then it would be OK for me to indulge in earthly things to my own pleasure. But the Scriptures are against that. Do you remember the parable of the rich fool? He said, "I'll build barns, take my ease, and eat and drink and be merry." And God said, "Thou fool. This night shall thy soul be required of thee." God's purpose is not man, it is not us, it is not me in giving things to me. But God's purpose is that I glorify Him with what He has given. He has created all things. He has redeemed me and He has redeemed my possessions through the blood of His Son Jesus Christ, so that, as a believer, and with the things

given to you? How remarkable that any one of us should have anything from God.

That brings us to the purpose of this commandment and, indeed, the purpose of the whole law.

It is to lead us to Jesus Christ. We cannot keep the law, we cannot

That brings us to the purpose of this commandment and, indeed, the purpose of the whole law. It is to lead us to Jesus Christ.

keep the high standards of the law, especially in this commandment which has to do with our heart. This commandment exposes our sin before God and it leads us to look at Jesus Christ, who did no sin, who knew no sin, who could not be condemned. In John 14:30 Jesus, as He is going to the cross, says that the prince of this world hath nothing in Him. Satan comes accusing. He accuses us in our conscience, and we say, "Yes, we're guilty." But he can find nothing in Jesus Christ. We all falter, but Christ remains standing, holy, blameless, undefiled, separate from sin, the Lamb without spot of blemish. And the Father says, "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased." There is our deliverer. And we must confess our sin and trust His righteousness and set our mind on Him and find our treasure and life in Him.

What a Savior, what a salvation. He delivers me from my sinful self. He forgives me all my sinful inclinations. He renews me in the inward man and gives me different, new, heavenly desires and loves. He

overcomes the sins of my heart. He pays the price for my sinfulness and my sinful

nature. In gratitude I seek not the treasures of this earth, but the things above that will never fade, the treasures of heaven.

This is where the law leads us. It is a schoolmaster to bring us to Jesus Christ. As we see our sin, may God work in us a true repentance to look to His Son for our salvation.

Let us pray.

Father, we thank Thee for this commandment, and we pray that as we consider the sins in our hearts we will learn to look away from ourselves to Jesus Christ for all our salvation. We thank Thee for the grace that we have in Him. And we pray, work that grace in our hearts so that we are renewed in our minds and transformed from within by the power of Thy Holy Spirit. We pray it for Jesus' sake, Amen.

He has given, I might glorify Him. Romans 11:36 puts it this way: "Of him, and through him, and to him, are all things." So I must serve the Lord with what He has given to me.

Those are the principles, the grand biblical principles that stand behind this commandment, "Thou shalt not steal." There are many other principles in the Word of God that have to do with financial stewardship and the handling of money as a Christian, but the main thing is that we live before God; that we remember Him; that we honor Him with what He has given; that we understand that He owns all things; that He is the distributor of wealth; and that His glory is the ultimate purpose of our existence and of our possessions.

The commandment is very specific: "Thou shalt not steal." It needs to be specific because there is a certain power over us that earthly possessions can have. That power really has to do with our sinful hearts and with the desires of our sinful hearts to have more of this earth's possessions. The sin that this commandment addresses is not just a sin that can be seen out there in the world, but it is a sin that has to do with our own hearts. When we come to the application of this commandment, that is what we must see. Yes, there is a stealing and a

theft that is recognizable and that is punishable. We think of things like embezzlement and corporate money laundering and fraudulent marketing over the Internet and theft and robbery of banks and so on. Or shoplifting. And those are sins that God hates. But there is a greater sin. That is the sin that God sees in the heart of man.

We must examine ourselves. We must examine our hearts before this commandment. There is what man sees and there is what God sees. And God's eyes discover thieves and robbers who appear to others to be honest citizens. God sees greed and covetousness. God observes manipulation and dishonesty. He watches over commerce and He sees the seller trying to trick the buyer. He sees the buyer trying to deceive the seller. God watches the social order of society. He sees how the rich deal with the poor and what the poor will do to get money out of the rich. He observes what goes on in the workplace—the employee extending his lunch break, manipulating his working hours; the employer who does not deal fairly with his employees. Proverbs 15:3: "The eyes of the LORD are in every place, beholding the evil and the good."

We have to be aware of the many, many areas in our life in which we can fall into the sin of

theft. All of them come back to this: selfishness, covetousness, greed, and thus the sins that are in our heart. Whenever this ugly sin, this ugly sin of putting self first, shows up, we will do anything to steal from others, to steal the honor that belongs to another, to steal the joy that belongs to another, to steal the praise that another is receiving. To become right in an argument we put ourselves forward. So there is theft, theft that is punishable by the law. But there is also a theft in our hearts in which we put ourselves first.

But we can break this commandment not only by wrongly acquiring the possessions of this earth, but also by wrongly using what God has given, by abusing the good gifts that He has given. There are those who are very honest in the way that they get things. They work hard; they do not deceive. They are not greedy in getting things for themselves, but they sin in the way that they use the things that God has given to them, either by wasting His good gifts, or by being miserly and overly protective of those things. God gives us all things and God owns all the things that we have. And He gives us things not only in the area of money and possessions, but also in the area of talents and opportunities and relationships. Even if we have no money, God has given us many things. He

has given a home. He has given food. He has given parents and relationships. He has given friends. He has given abilities. And we can steal from God by not using these things properly. You see, we are stewards, and we must use everything as best we can to serve God. Proverbs 3:9 says, “Honour the LORD with thy substance.” That is really the sum of Christian living: that we use all that we have and all that we are—our bodies, our eyes, our minds—all those things to serve God. We can squander those good gifts, and we can waste them. When it comes to money, especially in our affluent society, we so easily waste the things that God has given to us without any thought of Him.

For some reason, when it comes to our money, we are very private and protective. We say, “It’s my business how I spend my money.” But it is not. We are accountable to God. And we need to be more accountable than we are to each other. The danger of affluence is that we do not learn to be good stewards, that what we receive so easily we spend just as easily and we spend, in the end, according to what we want—our desires—and we forget that what we have belongs to God and that we must answer to Him.

The Scriptures teach us that God does not give us money to consume on our own lusts, on our

Bible is very clear and very plain on this. Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world, for everything in the world passes away (I John 2). II Peter 3:10 says that this world will be melted with a fervent heat. Not only this world, but also our lives will come to an end. James says that our life is a vapor. The Scriptures teach that man’s days are like a shadow, they are like a dream that is forgotten. They are vanity, and everyone who is born will die. Everything—your body, your position, your possessions—all of it will be taken from you in a moment. So, what are your goals? What are your desires? What are your hopes? What are your loves? For what do you live? If our life is motivated by covetousness, then our life will end in the disaster of the rich fool whose life was required and then God said, “Whose shall these things be?” That is the truth. That is not a disappointing truth for the child of God, for we live for a heavenly city, a better country. And we treasure the things that will not fade, where the gold will not grow dim. And what a motivation. We are pilgrims and strangers here in the earth who seek a heavenly city.

The third truth that motivates us in keeping and obeying this commandment is that God has already given us much more than we deserve. That comes out of the commandment itself.

Who are you? The commandment exposes you as a sinner who is corrupt in your nature. What do you deserve? Nothing. One thing: the judgment of God. And the things that we have, we do not deserve. The things that we have are all a gift from God. II Corinthians 4:7 asks the question: What do you have that you did not receive? Everything is a gift. If we would really understand this, then we would be thankful for what God has given and not be covetous. We would recognize that God has given us more than we deserve. And that is true not only with regard to earthly things but especially heavenly things and the blessings of salvation that are ours in Jesus Christ. What a wonder, what a grace God has shown to us in giving us salvation in Jesus Christ. If we would understand that, then we would learn to be content.

But what do we do? We compare ourselves with the neighbor. We say, “I work harder than him. I’m a better person than him. I deserve more than him. I have rights as a human being.” We should understand that as far as God is concerned and standing before God, we really have no rights. Everything is a gift. Then, not only will we not be covetous, but we will be generous with what God has given to us. Do you understand that? The amazing grace of God in what He has

to the child. So, we must ask them the questions about their motives. We must teach them to live out of a heart of love and faith and not simply to live to an external standard.

This commandment requires something that has to do with our desires, our heart. “Thou shalt not covet.” Also behind this commandment there are important truths that should motivate us against this sin of coveting.

The first is the truth of the sovereignty of God. This truth is at the heart of the Reformed faith. But as we come to this commandment we must understand that this truth (the sovereignty of God) tells us not only that God is sovereign in grace and in our salvation, but especially that God is sovereign over all the events of our

life and that we trust in a God who, in His sovereign rule, works all

things for our good. If we understand that, if we confess that, then we will learn to be content and to rest in quiet faith in Him rather than coveting. We forget this, and when covetousness springs up in our heart we are denying the sovereign control of God. We are saying something like this: God does not understand; God is not good to

me; God is doing me wrong by withholding things from me; does God know what He is doing? This is discontentment. If I find myself coveting, that is what I am saying. I am not content, I am not happy with what God is doing. Then, if that is you, you need to understand the truth of the sovereignty of God. What a comfort it is to know that God is sovereign. What an encouragement in contentment. This is the answer to all covetousness. Not to get the things that I want and desire to have bigger and better things, but to look today at where I am at, in whatever situation I am and confess that God is sovereign. Covetousness, this desire for more and for what God withholds from me, comes from within. Contentment is a state of mind that is not determined by outward circumstances.

Paul says in Philip-
pians 4:11,
“I have
learned, in
whatever
state I am, therewith to be content.” So we confess the sovereignty of God. And that motivates us in our desire to be content.

The second truth that we must understand in order to be motivated in obedience to this commandment is that the world in which we live is passing away. It is fleeting. It is temporary. We forget this. And yet the

own desires. The kingdom must be first, not in this way, that I give a certain percentage of what I have to the kingdom and the cause of Christ and the rest is for me, but rather in this way, that all that I have belongs to God. So God requires that with everything that He has given to me, I plan and I am a steward and I manage my finances and my money in such a way to serve Him and to serve His kingdom and causes. In Proverbs 18:9 we read: “He also that is slothful in his work is

brother to him that is a great waster.” We see here that theft includes wasting and that theft includes laziness and abuse of the things and the opportunities that God has given.

So, as we come to the end of this message, I want to close with the positive requirement and aspect of this commandment as we find it in the book of Ephesians, chapter 4, verse 28. There the apostle Paul writes: “Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth.”

There are two things here: working and giving. And the two must go together. Perhaps we can think of them as two steps of obedience. You can stand on the lower step of working with your hands. Then you might say, “Well, I’m obeying this commandment. I’m acquiring my possessions in the God-appointed way. I’m not stealing from

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others.” Certainly that is obedience. God has ordained work as a way for man to acquire the possessions and the necessities of this

life. Work is not a curse. God put man on the earth to work, to multiply and replenish and subdue the earth. But the question is: Why do you work? Do you work in order to live, or do you work in order to give? That is the second step here. In our obedience we can stand higher by working in order to give. The expression of true obedience, of real stewardship with what God has given to us, is generosity in heart and in action.

God has given me things not for me (that is self-love), but for me to love Him and to love my neighbor. That is the Christian purpose in working. I do not

work to get ahead myself or to make sure that my children have a good position and education, but I labor as a Christian in order to alleviate the cry of the needy. That is revolutionary in a world where all men are trying to get ahead themselves. The Christian motivation is not greed but grace. It is because the believer has experienced grace that he labors with grace.

This was the purpose of Jesus Christ in His work, was it not? He came into this world to work. In John 5:17, He says, "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work." And in John 17:4, at the end of His ministry in a prayer to God, He says, "I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do." That work was motivated by grace, by generosity towards you and me who are sinners and thieves.

You remember Zacchaeus. Jesus came to the house of Zacchaeus, who had stolen, who was a thief. And He came not to expose his sin but to bring salvation and grace to the house of Zacchaeus. It is out of that grace that He went to the cross and He was numbered with the transgressors, that is, He was crucified with two malefactors who were thieves. He said to one of them, who was repentant, "Today, thou shalt be with me in Paradise." You see, here is

the grace of Jesus Christ, that He comes to those who do not deserve and He gives, He gives Himself. It is that grace in which He has come to us that motivates us to live and work in this world in order that we, in grace, may have, to give to those who need.

This is God's world. He puts us in it as stewards. He calls us to work and then He calls us to work for His glory and out of love for Him. And that love comes to expression in this, that we with generosity give to others who need. May God so guide us as we live as Christians in the midst of a material world.

Let us pray.

Father, we thank Thee for the possessions that we have, for the opportunities that we have. But we thank Thee, especially, for the work of Thy grace towards us that transforms our view of earthly things so that we live by faith in a material world and we live in love, seeking Thy glory and seeking the good of others. Lord, forgive us for the sins in our heart that are selfish, covetous, and greedy. Help us, Lord, with transformed hearts and lives to live for Thy glory also with regard to our earthly things. We pray this in Jesus' name and for His sake, Amen.

questions our motives, we get very defensive. We see our heart as our personal territory and nobody else's business, and we think it is not fair that someone should question our motives. But we see in this commandment that, as we stand before God, the motives of our heart are fair game. So, in repentance, we must repent not only of our sinful deeds but also of our evil thoughts and desires, and we understand the depth of the atoning death of Jesus Christ. He died on the cross not only for sinful deeds and words, but also for the sins in our heart.

In the third place, this commandment teaches us some-

thing about sanctification—that the battle with sin is total; that we struggle against sin not just in deeds; that our fight for holiness is

not just external; but that we must fight against the power of sin in our heart, in our nature. I Peter 2:11 teaches us that the struggle against sin is in the soul: "Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul." This is where the battle begins. So, as we desire holiness, we must

seek and pray for it within. In Psalm 51 the psalmist says, "I am evil, I am born in sin. But God, you desire truth within."

The fourth truth that this commandment teaches us has to do with our relationship to others and how we judge others. What we tend to do is judge others by externals and compare ourselves. We do that in order to justify ourselves. Then we really do not understand the depth of our own sin. Jesus speaks of taking the beam out of your own eye when you think of the brother. If we honestly compare ourselves with others, then our conclusion should be "that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sin-

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of whom I am chief"*

ners; of whom I am chief" (I Tim. 1:15), because, examining sin, I know my own better than anybody else's, so I will be humble in my relation to others.

Then a fifth important truth that this commandment teaches us is that, as we raise our children and we must teach them to examine and analyze the motives of their own hearts, the duty of a parent is not simply to control the behavior of his child. The duty of the Christian parent is also to teach heart issues

prospers; that we are thankful that God has given things to him; that we are glad about his success or position; that we encourage him; and that we are perfectly content with our lot in life, trusting in God in whatever our situation. This commandment is penetrating in its requirement.

How are you doing with this commandment? Where are your desires and your thoughts? Do you long for a relationship that another has?

Do you desire the respect and the position that God has given to

your neighbor? Are you jealous of the material resources and possessions that another man has? Are you determined to get something simply because you want it and are willing to go into great debt in order to achieve it? Do you long to be in a different set of circumstances than your present one? If any of those things is true of you, then you are coveting, and God is concerned about your coveting as much as your deeds. He is opposed not simply to adultery and theft, but the very thought of adultery and the thought of theft, and He cares, He is concerned about, what is in our heart.

As we understand the depths of this commandment,

we see how important it is, and how important it is also in our understanding the requirement of all of the Ten Commandments of God's law.

This commandment teaches us these five important truths. First, it teaches us that the law is spiritual. Externals may be enforced by the state; they may be enforced by parents. But here is something that really cannot be enforced by man, but it is still important before God.

I must not live simply by an external set of rules, but love God from the heart.

In Matthew 15:8 God says, "This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips [that is, externals], but their heart is far from me." God deals with the whole man. He examines and requires things in our love, in our desires, in our goals, in our hopes, in our fears, in our feelings, in our motives, in our anxieties. We must examine those heart things before the law of God. I learn, as I come to this commandment, that I must not live simply by an external set of rules, but love God from the heart.

The second truth that this commandment teaches us has to do with repentance. We tend to make excuses for our sin. We especially try to cover up and excuse sin in our hearts and in our attitudes. If ever somebody

THE REFORMED WITNESS HOUR

April 9, 2017
No. 3875

Messiah Must Suffer
Rev. Rodney Kleytn

Dear Radio Friends,

In connection with our commemoration of the suffering of Jesus Christ, I ask you today to take your Bibles and open them to the book of Mark, chapter 8. We will be considering verses 27-38. There are three sections in this passage and I will read each section as we go.

In the first section, we have the beautiful confession of Peter in which the identity of Jesus Christ is established. That is Mark 8:27-29:

And Jesus went out, and his disciples, into the towns of Caesarea Philippi: and by the way he asked his disciples, saying unto them, Whom do men say that I am? And they answered, John the Baptist: but some say, Elias; and others, One of the prophets. And he saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am? And Peter answereth and saith unto him, Thou art the Christ.

Jesus is coming towards the end of His earthly ministry and this event marks a turning point in the instruction that He gives to His disciples. It was exciting, up to this point, to be a follower of Jesus. He was the miracle-

worker and great crowds followed Him.

It was especially great to be with Him as one of the twelve disciples who were very close to Him. As the disciples spent time with Jesus over the years of His ministry, they begin to realize more and more that He is more than just an earthly rabbi and teacher; that He is more than just a man. They come to understand this gradually. We read the Scriptures from a different perspective, we see the complete picture. When we look at the birth and the life and the suffering and the death and the resurrection of Jesus Christ, we see these as one, as a part of the entire person and ministry of Jesus Christ. That helps us also to understand the Old Testament Scriptures and see the parallels to the Old Testament Scriptures and Jesus as the fulfillment. The disciples, however, walk with Jesus daily throughout His life as these things develop. They are captivated by the personality of Jesus, His popularity, His miracles, His wonderful teaching—there is an excitement about being with Him. In all these things they do not fully

understand who He is; and they do not understand what it means to be a disciple and a follower of Jesus. That is what Jesus, at this point in His ministry, begins to teach them. As they begin to realize who He is, He begins to teach them of His identity and what that will mean for Himself and for them—why He came into this world and what His purpose is and where He is going.

He takes them to the towns of Caesarea Philippi. This is north of Galilee. He goes with just His disciples. When He is alone with them, in a place where He is not known by the crowds, He asks them this question: “Whom do men say that I am?” This is an unusual question. It is the first time in His entire ministry that Jesus shows any interest or concern in what other people think about Him. He asks His disciples, “What do you hear, what are people saying about Me?”

It is not only an unusual question, but also an important question. This is really the question of the life of Jesus, it is the question of the gospel accounts. As we read through the gospels, this is the question that they are answering. In Mark 4:41 Jesus has just calmed the storm. And the disciples look at each other and they say: “What manner of man is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?” Early in His ministry, this is

the question, “Who is this?” Then, in Mark 14:61, at the end of His ministry, this question comes up again. Now Jesus is on trial before the high priest, and the high priest asks: “Art thou the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?” Who is He? That is the important question.

It is important, not just for those who lived during the time of Jesus or who first received the gospels. It is also important for us: Who is this, who is this that came in Bethlehem? Who is this that was the carpenter in Nazareth? Who is this that became a teacher and a miracle-worker and who suffered at the hands of the Jews and the Romans and was crucified and buried and rose again the third day? Who is He? We have to answer that question. Is He just a great teacher and prophet? Is He merely the historical Jesus as some like to think of Him? Who is He? How do *you* answer that question? We must have the correct answer or we will miss the gospel and the good news of the suffering and the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

The disciples answered Jesus: “Some say John the Baptist, some say Elias, and others one of the prophets.” The Jewish leaders recognize that there is something unique about Jesus. He is a great prophet. He is as great as the prophets, perhaps as great as John or Elijah or

this commandment adds more. There is a repetition: Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor’s house; thou shalt not covet thy neighbor’s wife. The repetition is necessary in order to uncover this deeper sin in the heart. We make excuses; we deny our sin. So the commandment comes twice to tell us: Thou shalt not covet.

Then it mentions seven things that we are not to covet. Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor’s house, wife, manservant, maidservant, ox, or ass (six things), and then the seventh: nor any thing that is thy neighbor’s. So, it is comprehensive. It covers the totality of what is not ours. Then, three times it mentions the neighbor: Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor’s house, thy neighbor’s wife, nor any thing that is thy neighbor’s. It puts this commandment in the context of our relationships, examining not just what is in our hearts and desires but our heart and desires in relationship to our neighbor. This commandment has to do with love for the neighbor. It is penetrating.

It is penetrating also in

its requirement. It addresses not simply behavior, but also the heart. Coveting—a desire. Proverbs 24:9 tells us that “the thought of foolishness is sin.” This commandment addresses the entire thought world of man—what goes on in the mind. When no words are said, when we are sitting still, when our eyes are closed, even when we are sleeping, there is still something going on in our mind. And we are responsible before God for our thoughts. Jesus makes this very clear in the Sermon on the Mount when He says in Matthew 5:28 that whoever looks on a woman to lust

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And we are responsible
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after her has already committed adultery in his heart. You see, God’s view of sin, what God sees of our sin, is much deeper than what we see or understand.

That is brought home to us by what we could say is the positive requirement of this commandment, indeed, the positive requirement of the whole law of God, and that is that we have a perfect heart before God; that we hate all sin; that we love God with all our heart, mind, soul, and strength; that we love our neighbor as ourselves; that we rejoice when our neighbor

THE REFORMED WITNESS HOUR

*April 30, 2017
No. 3878*

*Obedience from the Heart
Rev. Rodney Kleyn*

Dear Radio Friends,

In our radio messages, we have been considering the Ten Commandments of the law of God, and today we come to the last of those in Exodus 20:17: “Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour’s house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbour’s wife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing that is thy neighbour’s.”

As we have been looking at the law, we have seen that the law shows us our sin; it shows our need of Jesus Christ so that, as a schoolmaster, it brings us to Christ, seeking forgiveness in Him, and praying for the grace of the Holy Spirit to be changed so that we are more like our Savior. This commandment does this especially because it deals not with behavior but with desire. It deals with a heart issue: the issue of coveting.

What is coveting? It is an inappropriate desire for what belongs to somebody else. It is to very strongly want something that we do not have. Now, not all coveting is wrong. In I Corinthians 12:31 we are encouraged to “covet earnestly the best gifts.” There is a proper yearning and

a proper desire that should be in the heart of every believer. There are things for which we hope as believers and things we must seek. But the commandment is talking about wanting something that is not meant or not intended by God to be ours. So we wish for the possessions, or we wish for the position or the personality, of somebody else. This leads to jealousy and a deep envy and, in the end, a hatred for the neighbor. Not only is it a sin against the neighbor, but it leads towards discontentment and is, in the end, a rebellion against the sovereignty of God. Colossians 3:5 says that covetousness is idolatry. Idolatry is to worship something or someone in the place of God. When we covet, we put ourselves not only before the neighbor, but also before God. We worship ourselves—that is selfishness—and we challenge the sovereignty of God.

The tenth commandment is penetrating. It is penetrating in its form. In its form it is different from the preceding commandments. The preceding commandments say simply: “Thou shalt not commit adultery, kill, steal, or bear false witness. But

Jeremiah. But then Jesus asks the disciples: “But whom say ye that I am?” And Peter blurts it out: “Thou art the Christ.” I say he blurts it out because this is the first time that the disciples have expressed this. They are starting to realize it, but now Peter expresses it. And this is a monumental confession: “Thou art the Christ.” “Christ” is the Greek word for “the anointed.” It is the Old Testament word “Messiah.” Anointing is the ceremony in the Old Testament to make someone either a prophet or priest or king. Those ceremonies in the Old Testament looked forward to a prophet who would come who would be greater than Moses. They looked forward to a priest who would come who would be greater than Aaron the high priest. They looked forward to a king who would come who would be greater than David.

In Jesus’ day, many of the people were looking for a political Messiah to deliver them from the tyranny of Rome. In fact, at one point in His ministry these people tried to take Jesus by force and make Him their king. You can read about that in John 6. But Jesus did not come as the Messiah to be a political deliverer. He is not

that kind of Messiah. That is what Jesus begins here to teach His disciples. Peter says, “Thou art the Christ, the Messiah.” And Jesus takes this as the opportunity to begin to teach His disciples what kind of Messiah He is. That is what we have in the second part of this passage in verses 31-33.

And he began to teach them, that the Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders, and of the chief priests, and scribes, and

be killed, and after three days rise again. And he spake that saying openly. And Peter took him,

and began to rebuke him. But when he had turned about and looked on his disciples, he rebuked Peter, saying, Get thee behind me, Satan: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but the things that be of men.”

What we see here is Peter, and he speaks for all the other disciples as well, we see Peter struggling with the idea that the Christ must suffer. He does not struggle any more with who this is, but with what kind of Messiah this is. What is Jesus, anointed as the Messiah, to do? You see, that is faith in Jesus.

*Who is He?
...We must have the correct answer
or we will miss the gospel
and the good news of the suffering
and the resurrection of Jesus Christ.*

Faith in Jesus is not only an acknowledgment of who He is, but also of why He came into this world and why, from my point of view as a believer, He had to suffer. That is Peter's struggle. And this struggle of Peter uncovers something in him, something that also needs to be uncovered in us.

Peter's motives for following Jesus were not pure. That is what Christ addresses when He says, "Thou savourest the things that be of men and not the things that be of God." Peter is following Jesus for carnal and earthly reasons. Knowing this, Jesus begins to teach His disciples here that He, as the Son of man, must suffer many things. That is the issue at this turning point in Jesus' ministry. You say that I am the Messiah, the Christ. Now, what this means is that I must suffer. From now on in His ministry, as Jesus goes towards Jerusalem and towards the cross with His disciples, this is the message He will bring to them.

In Jesus' teaching here we see a striking contrast. He says: "The Son of man must suffer." "Son of man" is Jesus' favorite title for Himself, and it refers to Him as the promised Messiah. This is not just a self-deprecating title in which He refers to Himself as a human being, but, if we go back to Daniel 7 where this name is

first used in Scripture, we see that it refers to the glory and the exultation of the Christ. Daniel sees there the Son of man coming before the throne of the Ancient of Days, and there the Son of man receives a dominion and a kingdom over all the nations of the earth. This title, "Son of man," refers to His exultation and to His rule over all peoples and all things as the Messiah-King. That was very clear in the mind of the disciples and also in the mind of the Jewish leaders who did not like Jesus to use this title for Himself. But the disciples could accept this title. They trusted that their Christ would become this great ruler prophesied in Daniel 7. But now, Jesus says, "The Son of man must suffer." And that is the struggle of Peter and the disciples. The word "must" points to something that is inevitable. Jesus is saying that there is only one way, there is only one thing. This "must" refers to the fact that God has determined it this way in His counsel. Jesus is saying, "This is the way, the only way, to My exultation and glory and kingdom—through suffering. The Son of man must suffer. This is the will of the Father for Me. This is what I am willing to do." This is why Jesus is willing to go up to Jerusalem and to suffer, because He knows that He is the Lamb that would be slain. This is why He came into the world. He un-

get to know one another, and then, having gotten to know one another, to provoke one another and exhort one another to love and good works. You see, life is not easy. Every person has his or her own set of difficulties and burdens. If we would listen, rather than talk, we might get to know the burdens of other people, and then, instead of tearing others down with our words we could build them up. Proverbs 12 tells us that the tongue of the wise is health and that heaviness makes the heart of a man to stoop, but a good word maketh it glad. One good word can cheer us all. Words have impact. Proverbs 15:23 says this: "A word spoken in due season, how good is it!" An appropriate word, a suitable word spoken in season, how good it is. That word might be a word of rebuke or it could be a word of comfort. It could be a word of encouragement, a word of praise, a compliment, a thank you. Such a word, how good it is.

So, as we close, two questions. 1) Do you think about the positive use of your words and the positive impact that your speech can have on others? I do not mean to be insincere, that you should be insincere

with your words. Some people are so nice, too nice, and soon you get tired of all their soothing language. No, the Bible says that a friend loves at all times, and that the wounds of a friend are faithful. Sometimes a friend will bring appropriate words that are a mixture of admonition and appreciation. But Colossians 4:6 says, "Let your [words] be always with grace, seasoned with salt." The flavor of our speech must be gracious.

Then, the second question, in conclusion: Do you love God? Do you love the God of truth, and do you love your neighbor also in your love for God also in your words?

Then pray this prayer with me: "Lord, set a watch before our lips. Help us and teach us to say only things that are true, that are necessary, and that are loving. Help us to see the great powerful good in our words, in the words of the gospel, in the words that we speak concerning others. And, Lord, if one is listening and praying now who has been crushed by the words of others, use the gospel, the good news of gospel truth, to lift them up. We pray it for Jesus' sake, Amen.

Then, the third question is this: What I am going to say about another person, is it loving? Am I speaking about this person because I love him, to protect his name and his reputation? This gets at the heart and the motivation behind words. Paul says, in Ephesians 4:15, that we should “speak the truth in love.”

If we would ask those questions, if we would run our speech about others through this screening process, then so much less of what we say would be harmful. Is it true? Is it necessary? Is it loving? And we should pray, Lord,

set these watches before my mouth. This ought to be the constant prayer of the child of God.

Solomon says this in Proverbs 26:20: “Where no wood is, there the fire goeth out: so where there is no talebearer, the strife ceaseth.”

So I tame my tongue first by guarding my thoughts, second by guarding my words, and then third, by recognizing the positive potential of words, and then speaking accordingly.

You see, words themselves are not evil. They do have a great *potential* to cause harm. But, oh, what good can be accomplished

simply with words. Not only must we repent of evil speaking, but we must put on the new man and speak that which is good to the use of edifying (Eph. 4). We must love our neighbor with our words. Just think of the power of words for good. Think of the power of God’s words to us. He speaks the gospel, good news. And that good news, that gospel, is a power that saves. He speaks truth, and that truth transforms us. God equips the believer to use similar words in similarly powerful ways.

That begins for us, very simply, with speaking the Word of God into the lives of others. We do this both by being a witness of the good news of the gospel to unbelievers, by telling them about the wonderful things that God has done for us and calling them to faith in Jesus Christ, and also by speaking encouraging words from Scripture to fellow believers.

One of the main reasons that God calls us together as believers is so that we might minister His Word to one another. Hebrews 10:24 and 25 says that we are to gather together as believers so that we might consider one another, that is,

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derstood that when the prophet spoke of the suffering servant of Jehovah, that was about Him. He understood the cross and He was willing to follow the Father’s way. He must suffer. He will be obedient. This is the way to His glory. The Son of man *must* suffer.

But this is what the disciples do not understand. They do not understand it at all. In the next chapter, right after Jesus tells them that He must suffer, James and John come to Jesus and they ask Him, “Can we sit one on your right hand and the other on your left hand in your glory?” Jesus says, “Well, that’s the wrong thing for you to be thinking about. What you need to do first is to be baptized with My baptism and to drink of My cup,” and He means by that that they would have to enter into His suffering with Him. They do not understand this. All they can think of is the glory of the Messiah.

Peter’s response here shows the same thing. After Jesus says He must suffer, we read that Peter took Him and began to rebuke Him. Matthew tells us that Peter said, “It shall never be,” and he means by that, “I

won’t let this happen.” Peter wants to protect Jesus against the attacks of the Jewish leaders.

But, as Jesus points out to Peter, this is carnal, this is earthly thinking. Peter, like James and John who want to sit with Jesus in His glory, is being earthly-minded. His motives for following Jesus are

selfish. He wants the excitement and the popularity of Jesus to continue. He wants Jesus to become this great political ruler and he wants to be close to Jesus in that high position. That is what it means that he savors the things of men rather than the things of God. Yes, he wants Jesus as the Christ and the Messiah, but he does not want Him to suffer.

You see, this is what is of God. The “things that be of God” refers to the suffering of the Messiah. This is the way of the Messiah to enter into His glory—through His suffering. Peter misunderstands suffering. He views it as defeat. He does not realize that the glory of Christ must come through His suffering. He did not see that the suffering of Jesus would be the atoning sacrifice and payment

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for sin. Peter missed the fact that his own way to glory was only through the payment of his sin, through the suffering and the death of the Messiah. When Jesus rebukes Peter for this, He is really saying, “Peter, I must suffer because, without it, there is no salvation; without the cross there is no way for you or James or John or any other to partake in My glory.” You see, the obstacle here for the disciples is this suffering. And Jesus, in His rebuke of Peter, tells them that this is from the devil. He says, “Get thee behind me, Satan.” He does not mean that Peter himself is Satan, but He means that what Peter expresses when he rebukes Jesus for this comes from the devil—that it presents a temptation to Jesus. In His strong rebuke of Peter, we see that Jesus will not even entertain the thought of foregoing His suffering. This is the only way. And in His willingness to go this way, He shows His love, His resolve, His obedience to the Father. Ah, the Savior’s love. He will go the way of suffering for these disciples, for us.

What this passage teaches is that the Christ who saves is the One who suffers for sin.

The cross and suffering of Jesus Christ are not merely an example of love or of obedience. They are not just an illustration of what commitment looks like, but the cross and the suffering of Jesus Christ are necessary for sin. This is why Messiah must suffer. And the way to glory for Him and for us is only through the removal of sin by His death and suffering.

So, why did He come? He came because He must suffer for sin. And the sinner who realizes his own need, his own sin, understands that there is only one way to God, only one way to be accepted with God, only one thing that will satisfy the requirements of God’s wrath against man and deliver

As we think of the suffering of Jesus Christ and commemorate it, this is what we must confess: there is no other way for our sin to be paid than by the death of the Son of God, the Messiah.

one from hell and damnation. We cannot make ourselves acceptable with God by being good or by doing something.

No, Jesus must suffer to pay for my sins. And faith in Jesus Christ means complete trust in His death as the only sacrifice and payment for sins. Nothing in my hands I bring; simply to the cross I cling. As we think of the suffering of Jesus Christ and commemorate it, this is what we must confess: there is no other

about God. Psalm 139 says that there is not a word in our mouth but God knows it altogether. Proverbs 6 tells us that God hates a false witness, God hates a lying tongue, and God hates the one who sows discord among brethren.

Ephesians, chapter 4, tells us that by corrupt communi-

cation, that is, evil words about others, we grieve the Holy Spirit. So, the first line of defense for the tongue, for our words, is our thoughts—our thoughts about others and our thinking about God. This is how we tame the tongue.

Second, we tame the tongue by watching our words themselves, by recognizing how easily we can and do sin with our words. One of the Puritans once said that God has placed the teeth and the lips as a double sentry to guard the tongue. That is, we have to both open our lips and unclench our teeth before our tongue can say a word. We ought to think about that. In Proverbs 29:11 we read that “A fool uttereth all his mind: but a wise man keepeth it in till afterwards.” In the control of our lips, our teeth, our tongue, and our jaw we show wisdom. A wise person ponders his words before they come from his lips. Sometimes he remains silent.

Other times he waits to speak and he thinks first. The Bible says that “in the multitude of words there wanteth not sin,” that is, the more we speak, the more likely we are to sin.

Words cannot be retracted.

Words cannot be retracted. To think after one has spoken is too late.

To think after one has spoken is too late. So, before we speak

about someone else, we ought to ask ourselves these important questions about what we are going to say. Three questions. They go with the prayer of Psalm 141: “LORD, set a watch before my mouth.”

The first question. Is it true? Do I know that what I am going to say about someone else is true, or is it something that I have simply heard second or third-hand? Is not this how destructive and divisive rumors start, when someone who does not know and who should not be involved starts to talk? But God is a God of truth, and what we say should reflect what is true.

The second question we should ask is this: Is it necessary? It may be true, but does it need to be said? Are my words going to be useful, are they going to be edifying? Would what I say benefit another? Too often what we say is not only a waste of breath, but it would be better not said. Is it necessary?

How do we do that? We have to deal with two things, do we not? Not just our words, but also the source of those words in our heart. Here we see the commandment bringing us to Jesus Christ. By our words we are condemned as those who hate God and who hate the neighbor. So, we are brought to Christ in repentance. We cry out for forgiveness. As we, by faith, consider the death of Jesus Christ on the cross, we realize that He paid the price there also for the sin of our words. Jesus Himself said that God would bring every work into judgment, including every idle word that is spoken. The judgment of our sinful speech God laid on Jesus Christ.

But also we find in Jesus Christ a new source for words, that is, He gives us new hearts. He sanctifies the source of our words. He fills us with love for God and for others, and then out of our mouth proceed words of blessing and encouragement. We become aware of sinful thoughts and words. We engage in a war with our words and we put off slander and evil speaking and we begin to speak words of truth and love. In this way the tongue, that unruly evil, becomes tamed.

Here I want to speak in a very practical way to apply this commandment. I want you to think of this: How do I tame my

tongue? There are three ways. First, I must guard my thoughts. Second, I must guard my words. Third, I must use my tongue in a positive way for good.

First, I must guard my thoughts. Our thoughts are the source of our words. What we are thinking about another person is what comes out in our words. When I blurt something out about someone else, it does not come from nowhere. No, it comes from my thinking, my mind. We do a lot of thinking about other people. We compare, we evaluate, we admire, we envy, we despise. We smile when we think of others, or we do not want to think of them because it brings up wounds that make us angry. We are always thinking of others. Philippians 2 says that as we do this, we should esteem others better than ourselves. The Bible says that as we think about someone else, we should think of things that are lovely and pure and of good report. It even tells us that we should pray for our enemies and those who, in hatred, abuse us. You see, when you are praying for someone else, it is very difficult to think evil thoughts concerning that person. Here is what we say about others begins—it begins in our thoughts.

Also, as we guard our thoughts, it is important, too, to think proper thoughts concerning God. That is, to think

way for our sin to be paid than by the death of the Son of God, the Messiah.

Is that your faith? Or are you inclined to think of yourself as acceptable with God because of what you yourself have accomplished? As you think of yourself in comparison with others, do you see yourself as more worthy, more acceptable than others because of the good things that you have done? Or, when you think about the suffering Savior, do you ask yourself: Why did He have to suffer? Then do you say, “He had to suffer for me. He had to suffer for my sins. This is the only way. My sins deserve hell. I deserve hell. I deserve death and Jesus took my place. This is why Messiah must suffer. This is why God anointed Him and appointed Him to die for my sins.”

That means something for us as Christians, too. It means this, that, as disciples of Jesus, we, too, must expect to suffer. That is what Jesus adds in the remaining verses of the chapter, verses 34-38. He says,

Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel's, the same

shall save it. For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul? Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation; of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.

What is discipleship? What is it to be a follower of Jesus Christ? As we conclude, we note these four things.

First, discipleship means a cross: “Whosoever will come after me, let him... take up his cross, and follow me.” A cross is a life of suffering. Christianity is not the easy religion. Being a disciple of Christ brings with it great demands. Do you see that as a Christian? Discipleship is a cross.

Second, discipleship is self-denial. “Let him deny himself and follow me.” That is sacrificial living. Not just being deprived of something because you are a Christian, but giving something up. What have you given up to be a follower of Jesus Christ? Is it your job, your father, mother, wife, children, lands, Jesus asks? Are you will-

ing to give up your wealth, your home, perhaps your life for the sake of Christ?

Third, discipleship is losing your life: “Whosoever shall lose his life for my sake.” This refers not just to death through persecution, but it means dying to self. A person who dies to self subjects his will to the will of Jesus, to the will of God. He says, “My life is not for me; my life is not about me; but my life is for my Savior and about my Savior.” A person who dies to self, lives sacrificially. He serves in the body of Christ.

Fourth, discipleship means making a confession that identifies myself with Christ. Jesus speaks of that in verse 38 when He speaks of being “ashamed of him and of his words in an adulterous and sinful generation.” We live in an adulterous and sinful generation, and the temptation is to be ashamed. As followers of Jesus Christ, we must be willing to bear reproach for Him. This is what the disciples begin to learn as they follow Him to Jerusalem. And Jesus says in Matthew 5: “Blessed are ye when

men shall revile you and persecute you and say all manner of evil against you falsely for my sake.”

So, in this passage, we see a movement. First we see that Jesus is the Messiah, the Christ, the Anointed of God. Second, we see that the Messiah must suffer and that this is His way and our way to glory. And, third, we see that being a disciple of Jesus Christ means that we also can expect suffering. And that, dear Christians, is a privilege and, for us, the way to glory.

Let us pray.

Lord, help us, as disciples of Jesus Christ to walk with Him on the way, the way to glory, which is also a way of suffering. We marvel at His love. We marvel at His willingness. We marvel at the price He paid. And it shows us the depths of our own unworthiness. How grateful we are, Lord, for Thy grace. Fill us with gratitude, we pray, as we contemplate the suffering of Jesus Christ. We ask it for His sake, Amen.

||| *A person who dies to self,
lives sacrificially.* |||

||| Christ means that we also can expect suffering. And that, dear Christians, is a privilege and, for us, the way to glory. |||

of the belly.” There is a deep hurt. Then, in verse 21: “Death and life are in the power of the tongue.” That is what stands behind this commandment, that we recognize that with our words we can hate our neighbor so much that we ruin his name and reputation and, in fact, destroy his spirit, his desire to live. So, when we think about the power of words, we see that it is necessary to tame the tongue.

At the same time, we must remember that the commandments are showing us something deeper. They are showing us our sin. The evil and false and destructive words that come across a person’s lips are showing us the depravity of his heart. This commandment forces us to look into our own hearts to ask, Where do our harmful and false and hateful words come from? In Matthew 12:34 Jesus says, “Out of the abundance

of the heart the mouth speaketh.” That is, the mouth says what is in the heart. This means that we do not become evil because of what we say, but we say what we do because we are evil. Where do our words of hatred and slander come from? Why do we love to gossip about the evil that others have done? Why are we so ready to exaggerate

the flaws of others while at the same time talking up our own achievements? All these words come from a heart that is evil. That is what this commandment is teaching us.

In Romans 3, describing the universal depravity of man, Paul writes in verses 12 and following: “There is none that doeth good, no, not one. Their throat is an open sepulcher; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips: their mouth is full of cursing and bitterness.” Is it any wonder, then, that James says, “The tongue can no man tame”?

Yet the tongue needs to be tamed because it is such a potential for harm and because it is such an outlet of wickedness that is deep in man’s heart. Just as we would cage a wild animal or would put out a fire, so, as Christians, we are called to restrain our speech. In Psalm 34:13: “Keep thy tongue from evil, and thy lips from speaking guile.” In Psalm 141:3 we pray: “Set a watch, O LORD, before my mouth; keep the door of my lips.” So Proverbs 10:19 says that the one who refrains his lips is wise, and James, chapter 1, that a truly religious person will bridle his tongue.

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THE REFORMED WITNESS HOUR

April 23, 2017
No. 3877

The Taming of the Tongue
Rev. Rodney Kleyn

Dear Radio Friends,

Today we consider the ninth commandment, from Exodus 20:16, which reads: “Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour.” This commandment has to do with our words and speaking truth with our words, and it has to do with our words about other people, so, loving the neighbor with our words. We want to look at this commandment under this heading: “Taming the Tongue.” You recognize those words from James 3:8, “The tongue can no man tame; it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison.”

I want to consider with you, first, the necessity of taming the tongue. To see that, we have to understand the power of words, especially the damage that can be caused by what we say. There is an old saying that downplays the power of words. We say, “Sticks and stones will break my bones; but names will never hurt me.” Sometimes we tend to think that way, but it is not true.

The Bible teaches the power of words. In James, chapter 3, James uses three illustrations of very strong and large things:

a horse, a ship, and a fire. How do you control a horse or a ship? James says, with a small bit in the horse’s mouth, or with a little rudder. How do you start a fire? With a little flame or even a spark. James says that the tongue and words are like that. The tongue is a little member, something we often do not think about, but just a few words can change the course of history.

Now, if you attach that tongue to a sinful heart, it becomes a weapon of mass destruction. James says that you can tame every kind of beast, birds, snakes, and sea creatures, but no man, he says, can tame the tongue. The tongue is a world of iniquity. It is full of deadly poison. It is a source of destruction. It defiles the whole body, that is, it produces other sins. And it is set on fire of hell. That is, words make one worthy of the destruction of hell.

Think of what ruin words can bring. Proverbs 17:9 says that one who repeats a matter separates friends. Proverbs 18:8: “The words of a talebearer are as wounds, and they go down into the innermost parts

THE REFORMED WITNESS HOUR

April 16, 2017
No. 3876

Risen According to the Scriptures
Rev. Rodney Kleyn

Dear Radio Friends,

In our message today, we remember the glorious event of the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. I want to read I Corinthians 15:3 and 4, where Paul says: “For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures.”

We are especially interested in those last words, “he rose again...according to the scriptures.” In the church at Corinth, there were people who did not believe in the physical resurrection of the body and who denied also the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Imagine that! A Christian church with members who denied this centrally important truth of the Christian faith. The beauty of it is that, as a result, we have this wonderful chapter: I Corinthians 15, which sets forth this marvelous truth of the resurrection of the body.

In the first part of this chapter (vv. 1-11), the apostle Paul proves the resurrection, or he gives reasons why we should be-

lieve in the resurrection. There are four reasons that he gives here. The first is this, that this is the gospel that he preached unto them. This is the gospel that he preached when he first came to Corinth and preached . It was the gospel that they had received and that they had believed. He says in verse 11: “Therefore whether it were I or they, so we preach, and so ye believed.” The second reason he gives is that the resurrection belongs together with the death of Jesus Christ. The One who died is the One who also arose from the dead. The death of Jesus Christ makes no sense, and has no power and meaning, apart from the resurrection. A third reason or proof that he gives for the resurrection of Jesus Christ is the multiple appearances of the Savior to the disciples. He says that Jesus was seen of Peter and “of the twelve and above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto the present, but some are fallen asleep” (vv. 5, 6).

But there is one more reason for believing the resurrection, and it is the one that we want to

consider today: that Jesus arose and that the Corinthian church, and, indeed, all Christians, ought to believe the reality of the resurrection of Jesus Christ because He arose according to the Scriptures.

Now, the truth of the resurrection of the body and of the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead on the third day is, I will put it this way, a difficult truth to comprehend. Apart from the Spirit and grace, we would not believe it. That is because it is the reversal of death. Death is final. Death is awful. Death is a prison. It is a power. We find a reference to death here in this, that He was buried. Jesus Christ was buried. Death is a power that cannot be broken. The cords of death are strong. If you would amass all the power that there is in the creation and in the universe, all the power of medicine and technology, all the power of government and military, all the power of men and of animals and of atoms and of angels and put it all into the effort of raising one man from the dead, this could not be accomplished. Death is a prison house with doors and locks that stay shut, as it were, to eternity. Jonah says in describing death: "The earth with her bars was about me for ever" (2:6). Certainly that is the way the disciples thought of the death of Jesus Christ after He had been buried. When Jesus

was laid in the grave, as far as they were concerned, this was the end. They went back to Jerusalem and wondered, in their grief, What now? They remembered the promises of Jesus and the teaching and the miracles, and now He was buried, and it seemed that all this was buried with Him. The situation to them seemed hopeless. Death was final. Death blinded them. Death was a wall that they could not see over and beyond. Even after Jesus is risen, they have trouble comprehending what has taken place. In John 20:25 Thomas says, "Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe." Again, in Matthew 28:6 you have the word of the angel: "He is not here: for he is risen, as he said." And in Luke 24:44, when Jesus appears to the disciples, He said: "These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you." So, this resurrection of the body, resurrection from the dead, is a difficult truth to believe.

But, at the same time, death is what makes the resurrection such a glorious truth. Later in this chapter, the apostle Paul will write a hymn of victory: "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" (v. 55). Death receives a death-blow. Death is temporary. Death is a servant. Death is

him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong." Psalm 72 says that His wide dominion shall extend from sea to shining sea. Psalm 110:1, speaking of the exaltation of Christ, says: "The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool." All of these speaking of the glory of Jesus Christ beyond His death and burial.

So Jesus Christ arose according to the Scriptures. It was always going to be this way. And the New Testament event of the resurrection of Jesus Christ completes the Old Testament prophecies that look ahead to this.

And Christ, the resurrected, lives yet today. The third day He rose again. The idea that is expressed here in the Greek in the perfect tense is that this marked a permanent, perfect, everlasting, irreversible resurrection. Christ is alive. He is alive today. And that means that the benefits of His resurrection are sure for us, His people. Because He lives, we are forgiven. Because He lives and rules from

heaven, we are protected and cared for. Because He lives, we have victory in our confrontation of sin and Satan. Because He lives, the gospel goes forth with power to the ends of the earth to gather His people. Because He lives, I can face today, I can

*Because He lives,
the gospel goes forth with power
to the ends of the earth
to gather His people.*

*Because He lives, I can face today,
I can face tomorrow,
and I can face the future.*

*Because He lives,
I can bring a loved one
to the grave in confidence.*

*Because He lives,
I can face death
in the hope of glory myself.*

face tomorrow, and I can face the future. Because He lives, I can bring a loved one to the grave in confidence. Because He lives, I can face death in the hope of glory myself.

This is the beautiful truth of the gospel: Jesus Christ is risen from the dead according to the Scriptures.

Let us pray.

Father, we thank Thee for this wonderful truth and all the benefits that come from it to us. And we thank Thee, Father, that Thou dost give us faith to believe this marvelous truth and in it to find comfort and confidence for our lives. Bless us, we pray, in our celebration of the resurrection of Jesus Christ and give us to enjoy His life in us also. We pray, for Jesus' sake, Amen.

head of the serpent. That is a promise of the curse of death that came through Satan.

A little later in Genesis, Enoch is translated, taken into the presence of God without seeing death.

Then there is the faith of Abraham in the resurrection of his son Isaac. Hebrews 11:19 says that he accounted “that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure.”

Almost at the same time as Abraham is the record of the life of Job. Job expresses this very beautifully in chapter 19:25, 26: “For I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God.”

You have Elijah and Elisha, the two prophets who raised people from the dead.

Then there are promises of the resurrection, general promises in Isaiah 25:8: “He will swallow up death in victory; and the Lord God will wipe away tears from off all faces,” and in Hosea 13:14: “I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death: O death, I will be thy plagues; O grave, I will be thy destruction.” So, the Old Testament Scriptures present the resurrection in a general way.

But also, the Old Testament connects the resurrection to the glory of the coming Messiah. In Psalm 16:10 you have this beautiful prophecy: “Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.” Peter, explaining this in Acts 2:31, says that David is speaking as a prophet. He is not talking about himself. His grave and his bones are here with us in Jerusalem. So, he spoke as a prophet of another, of Jesus Christ the Messiah. That is a wonderful promise that the resurrection of the body of Jesus Christ would take place. He is risen according to the Scriptures.

And we see in Peter’s use of Psalm 16 a general principle that we can apply to all the Old Testament references to resurrection from the dead. They look ahead to the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Jesus shows that when, in Matthew 12:40, He says that, as Jonah was three days in the fish’s belly, so shall the Son of man be three days in the belly of the earth.

Then we think of the glory of Jesus Christ that is prophesied in the Old Testament. That is not an earthly glory, but it is a glory that comes to Him in His glorious resurrection body. Then His ascension, and His Kingdom from heaven. Isaiah 53:12, speaking of the Messiah in His glory, says, I will “divide

overcome in the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Death is something like having cold winter weather in April, in the spring. We do not like the cold weather when it comes so late in the spring. But we can smile at it because next week it may well be 80 degrees again. Death is like that—it is temporary, it is soon overcome. That is true, first of all, in the death of Jesus Christ. Peter, preaching on Pentecost, says in Acts 2:24 that God has raised Him up, and “loosed the pains of death: because it was not possible that he should be holden of it.” Yes, He was buried, but He was buried as One who would have victory over death. The decay of death could not touch Him. God did not suffer His body to see corruption. That is because He finished and overcame the curse of death already on the cross. He cried out, “It is finished,” and He overcame hell and everlasting punishment and everything connected with the curse of death in His death on the cross. He paid the price. He shed His blood. He satisfied the justice of the wrath of God.

That is the glory of the resurrection: death, which makes the resurrection so difficult to believe, is overcome. And that makes the truth of the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead essential to the Christian faith and central to the good

news of the gospel. The consequences of sin, all of them, have been overcome by the death of Jesus Christ. Everything that leads to death—disease, human suffering, sin and its power; all the punishments of hell that follow death, whatever—Christ Jesus in His resurrection overcame all of these things. That is the glorious truth of the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

Satan knows that, and that is why he opposes this glorious truth of the resurrection. Always there have been those who oppose this truth. Jesus had to deal with it in His day. You remember the Sadducees who came tempting Him with regard to this wonderful truth? This was the story, the propaganda, that the Jewish rulers spread when Jesus had risen from the dead. They said that His body was stolen away. The apostolic preaching, when it came through Peter and James and Paul and the other apostles was opposed on this point. Paul came to Athens and he preached and they listened with curiosity. But when he preached the resurrection, they mocked him. Before Festus, Paul preached the resurrection, and the response of Festus was, “Paul, thou art beside thyself. Much learning hath made thee mad.” And every generation has produced its Sadducees, its Athenians, and its Festuses. Still today, historians

deny this remarkable fact of history. Modernist theologians try to explain it away. Evangelicals downplay it. How often in pulpits today do you hear the preaching of the resurrection, the bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ and our justification and our regeneration and new birth and our sanctification and new life and our resurrection glory in the body on account of Jesus' resurrection from the dead? The devil is behind this. He knows that it is the heart of the gospel. If you read only I Corinthians 15, this is what you see. If you take away the resurrection, Paul says, then there is no more forgiveness of sin. Then there is no power in the blood of Jesus Christ. Then all the dead will perish in hell. Then being a Christian is a waste of time and we are of all men most miserable. Then there is no good news in the gospel. Recognizing this, the apostle reasons for and proves the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

I want to see how he does that here. How would you do that? Maybe you have to answer this question sometime. Someone says, "Well, prove to me that Jesus arose from the dead." How would you do that? Our final answer, and our final line of proof, is this: the Scriptures—that God, in the Scriptures, tells us that Jesus is risen from the dead. My faith is founded in the revelation and in

the Word of God. That is the way Paul argues in the text here for the resurrection of Jesus Christ. "He rose again the third day according to the scriptures."

Paul, of course, means the Old Testament Scriptures. The book to the Corinthians was one of the earlier epistles, so Paul is not referring here to New Testament writings, but to the Old Testament. That is very important because Paul is giving here the strongest argument that he can. This is his final answer concerning the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, both for the Jews and the Gentile converts. "It's in the Bible," is what Paul is saying. "The Bible said that He would rise from the dead." And, you see, that is always the final line of proof for the believer and for Christianity against the world of unbelief. When you argue with the unbelieving scientist about creation, or when you argue with a pro-choice advocate about abortion, or when you argue with today's tolerant masses about homosexuality, the answer is: the Word of God—what does the Bible say? And that is what Paul does here. This may be argued against, but in the end the argument is against God whose Word this is. And that is why Scripture is called the sword of the Spirit.

What we see here in Paul using the Old Testament Scrip-

tures to demonstrate the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead is the unity of the Old and the New Testament Scriptures. Paul says here, "When I came and preached the resurrection, I preached nothing new to you. What I preached to you was the same as what the Old Testament prophets preached and wrote about." He simply brought to them the death and the resurrection of Jesus Christ according to the Scriptures. Notice that in verse 3: He "died for our sins according to the scriptures." Verse 4: "He rose again...according to the scriptures." All of it was according to the Scriptures.

Christ Himself spoke with His disciples this way. Twice in His post-resurrection appearances in Luke 24 you find this. In the appearance to the two travelers on the road to Emmaus, He says in verses 25-27: "O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken: ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory? And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself." Later, in the same chapter of Luke 24, verses 44ff., He appears in the upper room to His disciples and He says, "These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses,

and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me. Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures, and said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day." That is because, as John 20:9 says, "As yet they knew not the scripture, that he must rise again from the dead." So, what Paul is saying here really is this, that you can prove the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the Old Testament Scriptures.

There are two lines of argument from the Old Testament that we should consider. The first is this, that the matter or the reality of the resurrection is spoken of throughout the Old Testament Scriptures; that physical death is never presented in Scripture as the end, the final end for man. You can go all the way back to Genesis and the Garden of Eden and see it there. There, in the original creation, is the Tree of Life. And God says this, after Adam and Eve fall into sin, of the Tree of Life (Gen. 3:22): "Lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live forever." The potential for living forever is there in the original creation.

You see that in the promise that God made to Adam and Eve—of the seed of the woman that would come and crush the