

VIDEO SERMON SERIES

# Sermons on the Heidelberg Catechism

by Rev. Bartel Elshout

*Sermon #51, Lord's Day 40*

## The Sixth Commandment



The John Knox Institute  
of Higher Education

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*Entrusting our Reformed Inheritance to the Church Worldwide*

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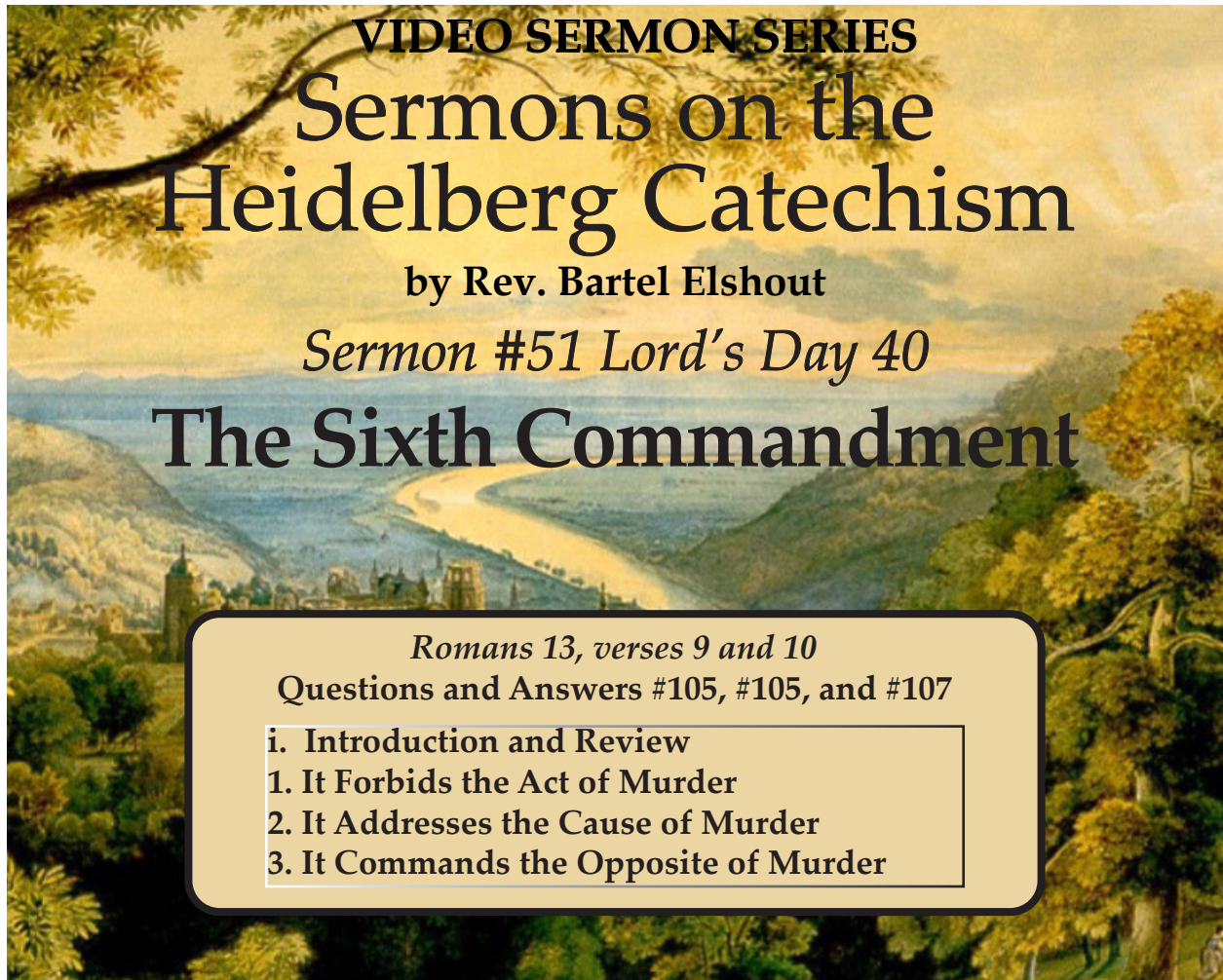
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*Sermon #51 Lord's Day 40*  
**The Sixth Commandment**

*Romans 13, verses 9 and 10*  
Questions and Answers #105, #105, and #107

**i. Introduction and Review**

- 1. It Forbids the Act of Murder**
- 2. It Addresses the Cause of Murder**
- 3. It Commands the Opposite of Murder**

**Introduction and Review**

Boys and girls, you probably saw in the bulletin tonight, we're going to consider the Sixth Commandment, "Thou shalt not kill." So let me ask you a question. When did the first murder occur in history? And some of you would probably say, "Cain was the first murderer." In a sense, that's true. But I read something this afternoon in one of my commentaries that really struck me. And this author said the first murder happened in the garden, when our first parents committed spiritual suicide. And as a result of that spiritual suicide, the first murder took place outside of the garden, but it began in the garden. Because, when our first parents believed Satan's lie, when they took the forbidden fruit, they died. They died spiritually, and as a result of that spiritual suicide which they committed, they brought death upon themselves not only, but upon the entire human race. And ever since that wretched moment, the world has become a world that is filled with deaths. And beginning with the murder that Cain committed by murdering his brother, this earth increasingly has been drenched by the shedding of blood.

And what a dreadful crime it is indeed, the taking of the life of another human being. Because, of course, that's the letter of the law. And it needs to be understood right from the outset that Scripture does not forbid lawful warfare. Actually, the Hebrew word says, "Thou shalt not commit murder." And so, *murder is the deliberate, premeditated taking of the life of another human being.* And that offense is highly offensive in the sight of God. It's very clear from the language that God

used when he addressed Cain, when he told him that the blood of his brother was crying out for vengeance. And so, we need to realize why this Commandment is indeed so very offensive to God. And we will see tonight that also the Catechism goes beyond the letter of the law in addressing the very causes that lead to the heinous act of snuffing out the life of another human being.

So let's turn to our Heidelberg Catechism, Lord's Day 40, and there, we read,

Question #105: *What doth God require in the sixth commandment?*

The Answer is: *That neither in thoughts, nor words, nor gestures, much less in deeds, I dishonor, hate, wound, or kill my neighbor, by myself or by another; but that I lay aside all desire of revenge; also that I hurt not myself, nor wilfully expose myself to any danger. Wherefore also the magistrate—that's an old word for "government"—is armed with the sword to prevent murder.*

Question #106: *But this commandment seems only to speak of murder?*

The Answer is: *In forbidding murder, God teaches us that He abhors the causes thereof, such as envy, hatred, anger, and desire of revenge; and that He accounts all these as murder.*

Question #107: *But is it enough that we do not kill any man in the manner mentioned above?*

The Answer is: *No, for when God forbids envy, hatred, and anger, He commands us to love our neighbor as ourselves; to show patience, peace, meekness, mercy, and all kindness towards him, and prevent his hurt as much as in us lies; and that we do good, even to our enemies.*

And so, this Sixth Commandment, first of all, *It Forbids the Act of Murder*, the act of deliberately snuffing out the life of other human beings. Secondly, *It Addresses the Causes of Murder*, that is unpacked for us in Question and Answer #106. And thirdly, *It Commands the Opposite of Murder*. In other words, the positive requirement of the Sixth Commandment, is that we love our neighbor as ourselves, and do our utmost to promote the wellbeing of our neighbor. So first of all, *It Forbids the Act of Murder*; secondly, *It Addresses the Causes of Murder*; thirdly, *It Commands the Opposite of Murder*.

And so, congregation, we are now dealing with what we call *The Second Table of the Law*. And we saw, when we considered the Fifth Commandment, that The Second Table of the Law begins by addressing the foundational unit of human society, namely, the family; and that society can only function properly if the family functions properly; and that within that family structure, God has ordained an authority structure. And we saw how that goes beyond the family to all the spheres of life, in which we are called to submit ourselves to those who have authority over us.

But now, we are going to deal with a negative, with a prohibition, because the next four Commandments all begin with "Thou shalt not." As we have pointed out to you in the past, the reason that God gave the law at Mount Sinai in primarily a negative form is because he gave the law to sinners. He gave the law, which Christ expressed in its original form, in Matthew 22 (verses 36 to 40), as loving God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength, and your neighbor as yourself, he gave that law in that form because he was now giving it to sinners, who are inclined to transgress the law. That's way, of the Ten Commandments, eight of them are negative, including the Sixth Commandment. And in the next four Commandments, six, seven, eight, and nine, we see how God there protects man. The Sixth Commandment is designed to protect life—life which proceeds from God. The Seventh Commandment protects the marriage relationship, the marriage union, this essential relationship from which comes forth, of course, the family. Then in the Eighth Commandment, God protects the property of our neighbor. In the Ninth Commandment, he protects the integrity, for we are forbidden to bear false witness to our neighbor.

## **1. It Forbids the Act of Murder**

But it begins with a Commandment that is designed to protect life, to protect the life of fellow

human beings. And why is this Commandment so important? Why is the transgression of it so vile in the sight of God?—because all of life, even in the animal world, all of life exists by divine creation. All of life proceeds from God. No scientist, no matter what they may claim, no scientists have succeeded in creating life. There are those who foolishly are engaged in what’s called “origin of life research,” and they try desperately in the laboratory to create situations, circumstances that somehow would generously produce life, to sustain, of course, the lie of evolution. And we know, congregation, that this is utter nonsense. We know that life proceeds from the Creator, that life is a gift of God, but that is especially true of the life of man. Because man, as you know, was the crown jewel of God’s creation. Man was uniquely created by God. Adam was the creation of the Triune God, created to be the son of the Father, to bear the image of the Son, and to be the temple of the Holy Ghost, created with unique faculties that would enable man to know the God who created him, to love the God who created him, and to serve the God who created him. Created in the image of God—that’s so important that, in Genesis 1, that statement is repeated to underscore the very unique nature of the life of man.

That’s why God jealously guards that life. That’s why God is so offended when that life is taken by another man. And yet, that is the tragic, tragic consequence of the fall. Because when the relationship with God was broken, the vertical relationship with God, when that relationship was broken, when man died spiritually, that spiritual death manifested itself also horizontally. We see it right away. Right away, the perfect marriage of Adam Eve fell apart, and there they stood, there Adam stood, blaming his wife. But worse than that, after they were expelled from the garden and God blessed them with children, we read of the tragic account of Cain, filled with such intense hatred towards his brother, hatred fueled by the fact that his brother was a godly man; fueled by the fact that evidently Abel’s sacrifice was accepted by God and his was not. And he committed the very first murder and shed innocent blood.

And congregation, the year 2025 has begun by reminding us that this continues also in this year. Many people began by wishing each other a Happy New Year, and within hours, we heard of another mass murder in New Orleans,<sup>1</sup> the very day I heard of a man randomly killing people in Rotterdam,<sup>2</sup> all reminding us that nothing is changed on January 1st, that we continue to live in a broken, sin-infested world, a world that continues to be drenched by the shedding of blood of innocent men.

So the Catechism begins by answering this Question, *That neither in thoughts—mentally—nor words—verbally—nor gestures, much less in deeds, I dishonor, hate, wound, or kill my neighbor, by myself or by another.* That’s what murder is. Murder is the deliberate, the premeditated, hate-inspired snuffing out of life. It is that wretched manifestation that, as fallen men, we have become lovers of ourself. So much so, that man do not hesitate to eliminate another human being if that human being happens to stand in his way. And we realize, of course, that that murderous disposition manifests itself in many ways. But, of course, there’s the blatant act of murder itself.

But congregation, I don’t think I need to elaborate on the fact that one of the most grievous murders that happens every single day in this country, is the murder of innocent, unborn children—innocent from our perspective; of course, they are sinners, I realize that. In other words, in our land, in our United States, we daily have the execution of mass murder. Mass murder is taking place every single day. That should make us shudder, especially when we consider the plain language

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1 New Orleans is a major American city located in the State of Louisiana, at the southern end of the Mississippi River, next to the Gulf of America.

2 Rotterdam is the second-largest city in the Netherlands, located at the North Sea mouth of the Rhine-Meuse-Scheldt delta, serving as Europe’s largest seaport, nicknamed “Gateway to Europe” and “Gateway to the World.”

that God used when he spoke to Noah. You've heard me say this many times, also in our prayers. This is a serious matter, congregation, for our United States of America, and for the whole Western world for that matter. Because God said to Noah, "If you shed the blood of a man, your blood shall be shed." And so, what God plainly stated to Noah, as a precept that would apply to all of humanity, If you shed the blood of another human being, you no longer have a right live. That is so heinous in my sight, and the reason why God said that, he explicitly refers to the fact that because man is created in the image of God. And that's why, congregation, we cannot pray enough that God would send repentance. Our nation, our beloved United States, is drenched with the blood of murdered children, murdered babies. Thousands of them are slaughtered every single day. That's a very serious matter.

Of course, there are other ways in which we can be transgressing that law, because it includes thoughts, words, gestures, *much less in deeds*, it says here. We think of other ways in which we can harm other people. But I think of another problem that I think I need to address. We know, and I don't know to what extent that it's true of our young people, but a lot of young people in our country are addicted to *gaming*. That's a huge industry. But you realize that a lot of those computer games are the glorification of murder; games in which they just shoot down, shoot down individuals, as if they were birds shooting them out of the sky. Then we are surprised when we have these mass shootings, where teenagers are simply acting out what they have done already on their computer. That's why I hope, I hope that none of our young people are involved in that world. Because to play a game of that nature would certainly be also a transgression also of the Sixth Commandment.

But we're also told here that we are also to *Lay aside all desire of revenge*. I will come back to that in a moment. But first of all, I also want to emphasize the language here, it says, *That I hurt not myself, nor wilfully expose myself to any danger*. In other words, what this Catechism, I think, is correctly understanding is that anything that is harmful to ourselves, anything that potentially is destructive to our physical health and wellbeing, is also a transgression of this Commandment. And there are various ways in which that can happen. I think of the plague, the plague of our culture, of drug abuse, substance abuse. That includes, of course, alcoholism. How many lives are being destroyed because of substance abuse? Then I think of smoking. Fortunately, fortunately, that has dramatically decreased in our culture. Because what we now know of this, we know that it is an exceedingly harmful practice; harmful in many ways, and countless people are still dying of lung cancer because of this practice. But there's also the sin of gluttony. You know that that matter has also been brought to our attention, also because of the new government that soon will take place. One of the men of that government has expressed his grave concern with the health of our people in the United States. People are literally eating themselves to death. That, too, is a transgression of the Sixth Commandment. But then, there's also the sin of being a workaholic. Work is honorable. We are called to labor diligently. But if we work to such an extent that we harm ourselves, harm our body, harm our health, we need to repent of it. So anything that's harmful to our wellbeing; anything that's harmful to our physical life, would fall under the umbrella of this Commandment.

Nor am I to *expose myself to any danger*. And of course, that would include the sin of suicide, when someone kills himself or herself. And it's alarming how many young people in the United States are committing suicide. What a grievous, grievous act that is when a human being lays a hand on himself and ends his or her life. And I realize that that's a very sensitive subject. Because there are some who categorically say that someone who commits suicide is lost. And I would say that, in the majority of cases, I'm afraid that that's true. I once heard a minister say, "Committing suicide is not the unpardonable sin, but," he said, "I would not want to appear that way before God." And I thought that was very sound advice. My mother always cautioned me against being too radical

on suicide. She would say to me, “Son, there’s only one unpardonable sin in Scripture, and that’s a sin against the Holy Ghost.” Now, realistically, of course, the manner in which most suicides are committed precludes the possibility of repentance. I recognize that. But I do think, and I know of cases, where people suffered from severe mental illness that led to that sin. I remember a case in New Jersey,<sup>3</sup> a member of my former wife’s family, suffered from serious clinical depression. And one day we heard the sad news that they found her in the garage. She had closed the garage door, turned on the engine, breathed in, and you know where they found her? They found her collapsed in front of the door—she was trying to get back into the house. She must have realized what happened. Again, I can’t judge her, but I think we have to be very careful here. But having said that, it is a very serious violation of the Sixth Commandment to take your life. It’s devilish, it’s Satanic—when people commit this act, he’s behind it all; he’s the destroyer of life. Of course, the question, then, is asked, could a child of God commit that sin? That really becomes a sensitive matter. And then my mom told me that she knew a pastor whom she highly esteemed, a godly man, but who also became very ill, clinical depression, and he hung himself. Again, I do not want to judge. But the reason I give you these examples is that we need to be very careful, we need to be cautious. On the other hand, I fear that the vast majority of them, those who commit suicide, will open their eyes in hell. And I think the counsel of this pastor, that, “I would not want to meet God that way,” is a very sound one indeed. And of course, when we think of God’s children, that they have the promise, the promise of God that he will not forsake the work of his own hands, we have to keep that in mind as well. But I just highlight this, because this is very sensitive, and I think we need to be very, very careful here.

But it also means not hurting yourself, means that we should not ever take unnecessary risks. And I think there are certain sports that would qualify, that pose unnecessary risks to the human body. And I think that, too, is a transgression of this Commandment.

Then, the Catechism highlights the fact that the government has an obligation to deal with this sin. The government has a duty, a divinely-imposed duty to punish the transgressors of the Sixth Commandment. And so, there are four passages that I want to highlight. First of all, the one I’ve been referring to, Genesis 9, verse 6, which is foundational, foundational for us until this day: “Whoso sheddeth man’s blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made he man.” And of course, when God directs Noah this way, the implication is that those who are appointed thereunto, as we just read from Romans 13, who are lawfully appointed thereto have the obligation to shed the blood of one who has shed the blood of another man. And so, clearly, God told Noah that the death penalty must be executed upon those who murder another human being. And so, in Leviticus 24, verse 20, this is addressed as well, where it says, “Breach for breach, eye for eye, tooth for tooth: as he hath caused a blemish in a man, so shall it be done to him again.” And there, God taught the people of Israel that the punishment must fit the crime. And the crime of murdering another human being is so enormous in the sight of God, man having been created in God’s image, that that crime has to be punished with death. So, we read it together in Romans 13, verse 4—the third passage I want to mention, “He”—that is, the government—“beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil.” And then, we have Jeremiah 48, verse 10: “Cursed be he that keepeth back his sword from blood.” And that specifically refers to the failure of the government to fulfill its God-given task. Then we wonder why crime has reached alarming proportions; why violence is spinning out of control; to know that the young man who, in cold-blooded execution, killed a man on a sidewalk in Manhattan, that in that state, he will not receive the death penalty, even though it was a primary

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3 New Jersey is a state located in the Mid-Atlantic and Northeastern regions of the United States.

case of premeditated murder.

## 2. It Addresses the Causes of Murder

But we need to go on; time is moving on fast; because I don't want to go home without having addressed the causes of murder. Question #106: *But this commandment seems only to speak of murder?* The Answer: *In forbidding murder, God teaches us that He abhors the causes thereof, such as*—and it begins with *hatred*.

Hatred—which human being cannot relate to that emotion? So here, the Catechism goes beyond the letter of the law. That's what Jesus did in the Sermon on the Mount, as you know. It gives us the spiritual exposition, the spirituality of the law, that God not only concerns himself with what we do outwardly, but God views us within. He sees the deepest recesses of our heart. "All things are open and naked before him." And so, what this Answer is emphasizing is that the very inclination towards that is viewed by God as a transgression of the Sixth Commandment. And again, the language of Scripture is very clear. Listen to 1 John 3, verse 15: "Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer" and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him." And what is hatred? Hatred means that you so despise another human being that you wish him dead. And so, Cain did not kill his brother overnight. No, he hated him, and that hatred grew, and became more and more intense, and finally culminated in the murder of his brother (Genesis 4:8). Think of the brothers of Joseph. They hated their brother because of his wonderful coat that his father had given him, and their intent was to get rid of him. They wanted to murder him. They decided to throw him in the pit, and you know, Reuben wanted to rescue him. But their intention was to kill him, because they hated him (Genesis chapter 37). Think of Haman. Haman—so offended by the fact that Mordecai would not honor him, and that hatred grew, and that hatred grew, and that compelled him to erect a gallows, having full intention to hang Mordecai on those gallows. Of course, you know the story, he hung on them himself (Esther 3:5–6; 7:10). And Absalom—Absalom, who began to hate his father, and was out to overthrow his kingdom (2 Samuel chapter 15). And that's why, of course, we are dealing with God's law in the context of sanctification. That's why, if we profess the name of Christ, we have to deal with such emotions. They are sinful, wicked emotions. We should seek, by the grace of God, to banish all hatred from our hearts. Because hatred is abomination in the sight of God.

Then, it mentions *anger*, sinful anger, loss of temper, being abusive towards other human beings. In Ephesians 4, verse 26, we read, "Be ye angry, and sin not." The implication is there that most of the time, when we're angry, we sin. Most of the time, because we are sinners, our anger spins out of control. And in Cain's case, it completely spun out of control, and led to the murder of his brother—sinful anger. James 1, verse 20: "For the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God."

God also abhors the *desire for revenge*. Again, that's that natural wretched inclination within us when somebody hurts us, when somebody offends us; that natural, wretched inclination to get even. That's why we have "road rage"<sup>4</sup>. And sometimes road rage results in people dying, of one man avenging himself for a perceived offense—the desire for revenge. Again, listen to the Word of God, Romans 12:19, we read it here together, "Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord." First Peter 2:23, now, this is speaking of Christ; this is so important for us to realize, for we're called to be Christ-like; we're called to be Christ-like in our obedience to the law, also in this Commandment:

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4 Road rage is an American slang phrase that describes aggressive or angry behavior exhibited by people driving a vehicle in traffic, resulting in behaviors like rude and verbal insults, even physical threats or dangerous driving tactics.

“Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously.” And of course, in Galatians 5, where we are also given a listing of the works of the flesh before we have the fruits of the Spirit, we read this, “Now the works of the flesh are manifest which are these...variance, emulations, wrath, strife...envyings, murders...they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God” (verses 19–23).

I would want to add, here—it’s not mentioned here—that includes also *slander*. Because slander murders people; it murders their reputation. Unspeakable harm can be done through slander. So, slander can be called *verbal murder*.

And the bottom line of this is, God assesses all of these sinful emotions as murders, as transgressions of the Sixth Commandment. That’s why this Commandment, in the exposition of the Catechism, is so very convicting. It goes to the very core of our being. And even though we may have never outwardly committed an act that could be classified as murder, but God knows our hearts. Boys and girls, he knows what makes you tick; he knows what lives inside of you; he knows your thoughts; he knows everything about us; he sees beyond the outward veneer of our lives. And who of us would dare to say in the presence of God that we have never been guilty of these sinful emotions, even after we receive grace.

### **3. It Commands the Opposite of Murder**

And so, we’ve looked at the Sixth Commandment forbidding the act of murder, and the various ways in which that can be done. We’ve looked at the causes of murder that lead to this. But also, importantly, we have to now look at the positive side of this Commandment, what is it that God commands? Because the Question, again, it’s a very convicting Question of the Heidelberg Catechism, as they often are. (Question #107): *But is it enough that we do not kill any man in the manner mentioned above?* And the Answer is, *No, for when God forbids envy, hatred, and anger, He commands us—positively, first of all, that we are—to love our neighbor as ourselves.* That’s the essential truth of The Second Table of the Law.

As you know, in the law, God reveals the purpose for which he made us. In the law, God reveals that he created us to have a love relationship with him, and a love relationship with our fellow man. And so, all the entire Second Table Commandments, five through ten, all can be summed up, as we read from Romans 13, all come under the one umbrella of this foundational Commandment that Christ gives us in Matthew 22, namely, that we are to love our neighbor as ourselves. Now, we don’t have any difficulty loving ourselves—we do. The problem is that because we are sinners, we only love ourselves. And God’s command is saying you should love your fellow man, you should love your neighbor as much as you love yourselves. That which you would do for yourself, you ought to do for your neighbor as well. And so, therefore, in Matthew 7, verse 12, Christ gives us what is commonly referred to as “The Golden Rule.” And Christ says there, “Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets.” This is a foundational precept of the entire Word of God, that you treat others the way you want to be treated; or, negatively, that you will not treat others the way you don’t want to be treated. Congregation, again, very convicting.

And so, who is our neighbor? Who is our neighbor? In a sense, every human being is our neighbor, but specifically those human beings who, in the way of God’s Providence, are part of our life, whose paths we cross. They especially are our neighbor. And then you realize, of course, that obedience to this Commandment, of loving your neighbor as yourself, begins at home. I’ve often emphasized, congregation, that real Christianity begins at home. It’s at home that we have to prove ourselves. It’s at home that we have to be godly husbands, and we have to be godly

wives. And we have to be godly parents. Our spouses, our children are, in the first place, our most immediate neighbors. But also, of course, the extended family, the people we interact with; also in the workplace; people that cross our path providentially, they are our neighbors, and we are to love them as we love ourselves. In some cases, that's easier than other cases. Some people are easy to love. Some people are not easy to love, but we are not to make any distinction. God's law requires that we love our neighbor as ourselves.

And then, it unpacks for us what that looks like. First of all, it says here, we must have *patience*, patience with the weaknesses and the shortcomings of our neighbors. Why?—because our neighbors are sinners like we are. They have flaws like we do. They have shortcomings like we do. And loving your neighbor means that we accept each other the way we are. That's the biblical concept of love—unconditional acceptance. Whenever I do premarital counseling, I always tell young couples, *Love is an unconditional commitment to an imperfect person*, or, to put it biblically, *Love is an unconditional commitment to a fellow sinner*. That's love. That's why we read in 1 Corinthians 13, the well known love chapter. Charity suffers long; charity has a lot of patience; charity is kind; charity envies not; charity vaunts not itself; charity is not puffed up.

Secondly, we must be *peace*-makers. You'll recall the sermon we preached on that passage, "Blessed are the peacemakers," from Matthew 5. Again, that's important to realize what Jesus meant there. He did not say, "Blessed are the peace lovers," no, "Blessed are the peacemakers." So, the very nature of a child of God, because he said, "They shall be called the children of God," the very nature of a child of God should be that he will always take initiative to live at peace with his neighbor. Now, it may not always be possible, and we read that from Romans 12, verse 18, it says, "If it be possible, as much lieth in you, live peaceably with all men." And so, that means that we should have a clear conscience before God, that if that's not possible, it is not because we did not try. It is not for lack of effort; that we have done everything we can to live peacefully with all men. We are called to be peacemakers.

Thirdly, it mentions *meekness*. Meekness—it's a rather difficult thing to define, but if you recall, *meekness is the disposition of someone who sees himself the way God sees him*. And when we see ourselves the way God sees us, that will manifest itself in a humble disposition. Again, Romans 12, verse 10: "Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another." A truly meek person will be willing to take the lowest place. A godly man once told me, when you try to resolve a conflict, even though you think that the other party is ninety-nine percent at fault, act as if you are ninety-nine percent wrong. Humble yourself. Take the lowest place. Be meek. You see, those two belong together. You can't be a peacemaker unless you have a meek and godly disposition; again, a disposition that is the result of seeing ourselves the way God sees us, and when we see ourselves the way God sees us, that's a very humbling experience, and then we will not elevate ourselves above others.

It mentions that we have to be *merciful*. Merciful—filled with compassion; that means that we have to be ready to forgive those who transgress against us. That's why, in Matthew 18, when Peter said, "How often should I forgive my brother?—seven times?" And Jesus said, "Seventy times seven times." And then he illustrates that in a powerful way by that parable, where he shows the ugly behavior of a man whose debt had been cancelled that was worth about nine billion dollars, and he grabbed his servant by the throat, and said, "Pay me what you owe me." Open your Bible, please, and on that passage, I want to point out to you—open your Bibles to Luke 17, and we're going to read verses 3 and 4, a powerful passage: "Take heed to yourselves: If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him."—now listen—"And if he trespass against thee seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn again to thee, saying, I repent; thou shalt

forgive him.” Can you imagine someone doing the same thing to you seven times in a day. And yet, if he comes to you seven times and says, “I repent, will you forgive me?” Well, you have to forgive. That’s what Jesus meant in what he said to Peter. Ready to forgive, you see—a merciful disposition. Galatians 6:1 and 2: “Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself.” And so, we must do whatever we can, it says here, we must do whatever we can to *prevent* our neighbor’s hurt.

So, to be a Christian, to be Christ-like, that means we are proactive towards our neighbor. We are proactive in seeking our neighbor’s wellbeing, rather than reactive. That’s what that means; that we will not be a respecter of persons. That’s why Jesus taught the parable of the good Samaritan. He taught that parable to convict that scribe that he was a transgressor of the law, but also to illustrate what it means to love your neighbor as yourself.

That means, also, that it is our duty—and with that, we need to close—it is our duty to do good to our enemies. Again, let me let the Word of God speak for itself. Luke 6, verse 32: “For if ye love them which love you, what thank have ye? for sinners also love those that love them.” It’s very easy to love somebody that loves you—but, to love someone that hates you? Matthew 5:44, “But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you.” Romans 12:20, “Therefore if thine enemy hunger feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head.” Luke 6, verse 35: “But love ye your enemies, and do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again; and your reward shall be great, and ye shall be the children of the Highest:”—and here, what a powerful argument—“for he”—that is, our heavenly Father—“he is kind unto the unthankful and to the evil”—and therefore, we are to do likewise.

And so, we have seen the negative side of this Commandment; we have seen the positive side of this Commandment, what God requires. And so, who among us is without sin tonight? Who among us has not transgressed that Commandment negatively, and also the positive aspect of that? That’s why we need to end at the cross of Calvary. That’s why Jesus was nailed to the accursed cross. He hung there as the substitute of transgressors of the law, also, the Sixth Commandment. And it’s remarkable, is it not, that Jesus literally took the place of a murderer, by the name of Barabbas. That center cross was designated for Barabbas, and Jesus took his place, and this murderer went free because Jesus was numbered with the transgressors, also transgressors of the Sixth Commandment.

Oh, the cross! What an amazing event! The Lawgiver nailed to the cross, treated as a law-breaker, to secure the salvation of law-breakers like us, transgressors of the Sixth Commandment. Then the wonder of the gospel, the wonder of the gospel, that there is forgiveness with God, also for the transgression of this Commandment; that the blood of Jesus Christ, God’s Son, cleanses from all sin, including the transgressions of this Commandment. And that’s where we need to be, for the first time, or by renewal. That’s where we need to end, at the foot of the cross of Christ. If you’ve never gone there, oh, I call you to repent, and to flee to this Savior, lest you will forever endure the wrath of God that will burn against all unrepentant law-breakers. But also, as a believer, we need to return to the cross over and over again. And what a wonder it is that God is always ready to forgive; that if we confess our sins, also the transgression of this Commandment, “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9).

And so, may God use the convicting message of the law, compelling us to look into that mirror, and that he use it to drive us into the arms of a willing and able Christ, who says to transgressors of the Sixth Commandment, “He that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out” (John 6:37). Amen.

**Let's pray.**

Great and eternal God, all-knowing, all-seeing, heart-searching God, Lord we all must bow our heads in shame. Who of us would dare to claim that we have not transgressed this Commandment, that we are not guilty of the sin of commission, or the sin of omission, or both? But Lord, our hope is in thy Son, in whom thou dost proffer peace and pardon; in whom thou dost offer a free pardon of all of our sins. May we end there. May we take refuge to this precious Christ, for the first time, or by renewal. God with us now as we depart to our homes and enter a new week. Bless the labor of our hands, and give us grace to be a godly people in an ungodly world. Give us grace also to love our neighbor as ourselves, especially those that are closest to us. Forgive all that is done and said amiss in this day and in this hour, and hear us for Christ's sake. Amen.