

Our Culture & Our Character

Pastor Norberto Restrepo Sr.

4. The Second Commandment Part 1.

We are speaking to a group that loves the law of God, so we don't have any problems.

All reformatory movements have deformed themselves. The word 'reform' is in itself a problem, because people want to change the forms. But the Holy Scriptures are not a book of forms.

Culture gives us forms; the Lord gives us principles, and the principles never change. A principle can never change. That's why the Lord never changes; because He is.

All human things are manifested through forms and we need to see behind the form what is the principle and we need to live the principle.

We cannot compromise on a principle. We can compromise on a form. But in religion, many have confused form with principle, or principle with form. And in religion we make forms into principles. And we make principles from forms.

Jesus never confused a form, but He had to live in the external forms of the Hebrew culture and forms change from time to time. Jesus' world was different from Isaiah's world. Isaiah's world was a world that had not been penetrated by the Greek culture. But Jesus' world had been evangelized and penetrated by the Hellenistic culture. And forms are constantly changing and that's why we have to reform forms. So people reform forms and many times they are unaware of the principles.

So here we have a serious cultural problem and I cannot resolve it. Joshua couldn't resolve this problem but he arrived at a conclusion: "I and my house, we will serve the Lord."

A serious problem among reformers, when a reformer wants to change somebody, he gets into a problem. John Calvin wanted to change the Swiss people; he wanted to make changes in the people of Geneva. With the best heart; with the best motivation; and he had to flee. He couldn't reform them.

Who can reform us? The Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit can change our forms—He's the only One.

When in Germany they wanted to change the worship, it was a cultural tragedy and the enemy used it to try and destroy Luther's work. The people wanted to take away the idols but the problem is not so much in the idol. The idol is a representation and it's evil—it's evil—according to Scriptures it's evil. But there is something greater than the idol, and that is what is behind it. And what is behind the idol is what makes the idol an idol—it is affection. And when we love something, values are formed. What makes the idol an idol, is not the form, but the principle of love, and the principle of faith. Then to change a form, the first thing you need to change is not the form itself. It's the value; it's the love that we need to change, and when we change the affections, the idols will disappear.

Most reformers have failed in this. They have taken away the form—the external form, but the affection and the love remains for that form. And people will always be looking for forms because the affections are still alive.

That's the problem we have with television. Children watch television, and suddenly the parents are converted. And they've been watching television for fifteen years. Mom went to work and the movie was the one that entertained them. And in this cultural process where we are losing our person, our values of security—our values of belonging, of love, the values of relating one to another, are transferred to the television set, and we lose that from the person.

So fifteen years in this process and the television and the child are not two—they become one. Just like the drunkard and liquor become one. So people are born again, so they know that television is not good for their children, so the natural motivation and the natural reaction, is to take away the television, and we take it away. But we don't take away the love for the television. We don't take away the pleasure; we don't take away the taste and the problem is the taste. What we need to change is their inclination and their taste first. And the only way to change a taste, the only way to change a pleasure, the only way to change a love, is to give a greater love instead.

And the only greater love, the only affection that is greater, the only real love that there is—is God's love.

But we have failed in giving that love, and when I do not give that love, a void is created, an emptiness is created, and Satan is an expert in filling up these voids. We create a crime when we don't pour out God's love to our children; because we are preparing them to be empty. And today there are many gods; that is what we have today, because anything that separates me from the love of God—anything—that will take me apart from the will of God, is a god, and we love that, and it's a serious problem.

So we come to the conclusion, as we come to understand these things, we come to one conclusion—it's you and your family.

Joshua lived in Moses' time. Humanly speaking it seems impossible that the people of Israel should go astray in Moses' time. But they went astray in Moses' time. And when Joshua arrived on the scene the people of Israel had gone so astray that Joshua had to make a proclamation. You remember Joshua's proclamation, Joshua said very clearly, and he said it as a challenge, and he told them: "Choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, or the gods of the Hittites, or the gods of the Canaanites, or Jehovah. Because I and my house, we will serve the LORD."

For Joshua, idolatry was a problem, and he wasn't able to resolve this problem. And the way of solving this problem was; 'me and my house'. We are living in a time when you and your family should serve the Lord; because if you look around you, you are not going to find faith; you are not going to find purity; you are not going to find sanctification out of our family. And even in our heart there is only sin and who can legislate that?

The Holy Spirit is able to change our idols. The Holy Spirit breaks through culture and breaks my values, but He breaks them unto salvation. He does not break them to destroy me. And at the same time when the Holy Spirit breaks my values, He restores and builds eternal values. And He makes the New Birth possible—that's the work of the Holy Spirit. He does not force us—He does it through pleadings—He begs us. He does it in love, because that is God's plan, without forcing, to give His love.

So the answer will be an answer of love, because any answer that is a forced answer, will convert the person into a Pharisee, or a schizophrenic. Righteousness by works; people will clean the bowl outside. And all reforms are full of plates that have been washed on the outside but not internally.

The work of God is from inside out, it is not from outside towards the inside. The Lord works inside first and then outside. But we—we only look at what is external and we fool and deceive ourselves with the external. But the Lord looks at what is in the heart.

That's the problem and the Lord will give you wisdom to solve this problem.

Let us look now at one of the reasons for the law of God, and let us look at the principle that is underneath. It is very important that we learn the principle that is under God's law.

The language of God's law is a very simple language—the most simple. Nobody can misinterpret God's law. The clearest word that we find in English and the clearest word we can find in Spanish—I don't know for you which one it is, but for me, the clearest word I can find is 'NO'. It's very clear. Do you need some hermeneutics to understand the word 'no'? Can you interpret the word 'no'? And if it's a no that comes from God—but the Divine 'no's' go against human forms. And then we have a problem. Joshua couldn't solve that problem. We need to solve this problem by faith because each one of us can give an answer to the Lord in our hearts.

One of the things that is difficult to understand today is the biblical principle of separation. The Lord always wanted a separate people. The Lord always worked to have a separate people. One of the most difficult things is to know how to separate ourselves and at the same time, still be in the world. That's a tremendous job.

Those who will be saved, have to learn this.

Daniel learned this and if Daniel could learn, we can also learn it. He lived in Babylon, and he did not live in one of the suburbs of Babylon, he lived in the house of the King of Babylon. He had to eat from the table of the King of Babylon. He lived in Babylon. He was a citizen of Babylon and he was not a part of Babylon. He never polluted himself with Babylon. Not many human beings have had that experience.

Most of us assimilate, and that's the danger, that we will be assimilated. The Lord knows that that danger exists, and Deuteronomy 7 is very clear in regards to what the Lord did—He destroyed seven nations—seven nations! To destroy seven nations, my brethren, to separate His people—we can't imagine that, because today we don't work with those forms. But in that time, that was the way of doing things. Many people don't understand these workings of the Lord. But He is Sovereign.

So they destroyed these seven nations and after that destruction, to establish the people, so they wouldn't be confused with the world, the Lord spoke about marriage. He told them that they could not marry someone that was not of the people of God. 'Thou shalt not give thy son to their daughter, neither shalt thou give thy daughter to their son,' because they will be corrupted.

What about us today? Have we followed this commandment? Have we been assimilated? How difficult for the Lord! One of the things that is the most difficult for the Lord, is to form a people that will not be assimilated by the culture. A family is converted and the children, they are not converted. When they are fifteen years old, they are totally assimilated into the culture, and we have to start again.

If this people had conserved its children, since the days of the pioneers, what power would we have! A genetic power—because in the law of God is promised the protection of our genetics. And God knows how to protect that, and He said ‘No’; and ‘No’ is ‘No’. For me, the word ‘No’ is ‘No’.

Let’s look at the problem. What is behind God’s law, when it is spoken in a negative way? The Lord gave His law in negative language. In the Garden of Eden there was a law, because God’s law is as eternal as Himself, because God’s law is not a rule. It is not a Roman law. God’s law is Him—His character. It’s difficult for us to grasp this, because we have learned that God’s law is a set of rules. But we have not learned that the law of God is a Person.

But God’s law is His character; it is what He is, and before sin, the expression of God’s law was something totally positive. But after sin, He had to give a law with the purpose of preventing. Heaven works with us in prevention. He does not work with medicine, the medicine—the remedy is after we sin. But before we sin, He has placed prevention. God does not want us to get sick; He wants us to be without sickness. In the same way He wants us to be without sin.

So in order to be without sickness, He gave us His commandments—natural law and moral law. In order that we might not sin, He gave us His law, so that we can know that the word ‘No’ means ‘No’.

There is something here that is very important; the Lord knew that my capacity for feeling—that my feeling capacity cannot be apart from His will. My capacity to feel was created to be lived in God’s will. My feelings were given to me to remain in God’s will; in God’s image; in His likeness. When God created us, the image of God was everything and our feelings were at the service of the image, at the service of His will. In that way, my feelings were not independent. They depended upon the character and the image of God.

Satan’s work, the specialized work of spiritualism, in the process of disintegration—not only has he disintegrated the body from the soul, when body and soul are separated and they are no longer one, there are many more things—emotions are separated from principle in such a way that emotions and feelings and sensory capacity—all that has to do with my feelings and emotions is separated from the only will—God’s will.

That is what is behind the law in negative language. And heaven knows—heaven knows, and has experienced it very well, because God is the best laboratory that there is. He’s the best scientist and He knows all the research throughout eternity. He knows what would happen in my capacity to see without God’s will—apart from the principle of God’s love.

Divine love independent of my visual capacity, the only thing that it can do is to destroy me. And the Lord placed the commandments: Thou shalt not commit adultery, and the Lord Jesus explained it: anyone who beholds; he who looks; independent of the principle of love is committing adultery in his heart.

The Lord anticipates the disintegration of the process of feelings and morality. Everything that has to do with our feelings and that which is moral is one in creation. But the enemy has separated it. And when we become independent, the only thing that can happen is that we degrade.

There is an expression in the Scriptures that explains this very well, Numbers chapter 15; and look how the Lord prevented it. The Lord knows what happens with our eyes and how the Lord has permitted the use of the word, and here we enter into the field of education. The Lord knows that my feelings need to be educated by His Word first. So my feelings can be conditioned, educated, by the Word. And we have failed in this.

Our feelings see the things that are out there, before receiving the Word. And when my feelings perceive the outer world, independent of the Word, that's Satan's work.

That's the way we have been educated—all of us. Mary taught her child the Word as sovereign and the Word informed His senses. The other way around was that his senses would inform himself. And the law of God is given for this, so that our feelings will be informed by His Word; by the character of God; by His reality, before anything else.

That can be done even in pre-natal life and mothers have failed in this. And that's where we see how deep God's Word is.

Look at this illustration—Numbers 15: it's given in a rule, in a form. But behind this form is the principle. But we read the form with our senses, while in the spirit we should have seen the principle. Let's read verse 37 and onward. "And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto the children of Israel, and bid them that they make them fringes in the borders of their garments throughout their generations, and that they put upon the fringe of the borders a ribband of blue:"

The Lord had to use as a resource, sensorial things because He is constantly uniting our things with His. He knows how to do this.

Verse 39: "And it shall be unto you for a fringe, that ye may look upon it." Look—a sense; you must notice here, the senses. The Lord has taken into account all our capacity to feel and He prevents, because He knows what will come afterwards, when I see.

We can include another element in here; very important. Today it is not important, but for the Lord it has always been important. How were Adam and Eve dressed? I don't know. I haven't seen anything. A dress of light? I can't imagine that, but they were dressed. I don't know how Adam's skin was before sin, and if there was some difference between his skin and his dress of light—I don't know. But something happened when Adam and Eve sinned and it was very important. And what happened when Adam and Eve sinned, happens in us when we disobey. And my feelings are depraved and degenerated more and more, and the Lord wants to prevent that.

Verse 39 "And it shall be unto you for a fringe, that ye may look upon it and remember all the commandments of the LORD, and do them; and that ye seek not after your own heart and your own eyes, after which ye use to go a whoring:"

Heaven knows what is in my capacity to feel when it is independent of God. And we don't measure that. We measure money, we count money, we add money, we multiply money, but we don't measure morality. We don't measure spiritual things.

We have machines that can measure anything. We measure the earth, we calculate the earth. We weigh the potatoes. What is it that we don't weigh? What is it that we don't measure? What is it that we don't count? All material things, but God

counts the feelings, because feelings is what destroys the soul and the spirit and God has taken that in account in God's law.

And He has restored that with a very simple word, 'No'. What is the principle that is behind—His love and His mercy, to save us and redeem us from all of this process of depravation.

Some people think that the Catholic Church was the one who changed the commandments. Haven't we changed the commandments too? What is more damaging, an advertisement on television, a naked woman on television, or the Virgin Mary? Which is more damaging? How do they dress the Virgin Mary? And how do they show the women on television? What is the effect that it has on the feelings?

Thou shalt not make thyself images. Oh, my brethren, what is behind that—we have not measured it. The Holy Spirit has measured it. The Lord has measured it. It's a very interesting commandment, because this commandment speaks of three spaces—three spaces! Heaven; earth; and under the earth. Is there any other space left? There are not more spaces. Up; here; and under.

It's difficult for us to understand this, because in Moses' days the communication industry didn't exist. How did they communicate? In Moses' day it was closer to God's divine plan. What did Moses have to do to communicate with his wife? Take out his cell-phone? You and I—you and I—that's what God created. I am for you and she is for me. They loved each other, served each other, that's the Lord's communication department. Person to person.

It's very simple. Have we lost that? And today we have a whole world of communications—totally different from Moses' time. How can we manage the world—how can we manage the world without letting the world affect us? Only the Lord will teach you—only the Lord.

Some people say that cell-phones produce cancer. I don't know if it's true. Other people say that television produces cancer; that the rays that it emanates produce cancer. Everything that man makes is out of harmony with God's plan. Everything that man makes, goes against God's creation. Everything! Man is unable to make something that is in harmony with God's creation. The only one who can create harmony is the Lord.

But we live in the world and only the Lord—only the Lord can protect us from the world. Jesus said, "Keep them from evil". Being in the world—it's the science of God. With you; with me; and the Lord gives us the wisdom to do it in the best way.

There is something very important and in a later presentation we will arrive to that point, but we want to establish God's principle in regards to our feelings and our morality. I want to leave you a piece of homework for that presentation. You are going to think about the following, Exodus chapter 20, verses 3, 4 and 5. "Thou shalt have no other gods before me. 4 Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: 5 Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me."

That is the homework: what is the iniquity of the fathers upon the children in relation to images? What is the iniquity?

As parents we say we love our children. And if we are grandparents—grandparents love their grandchildren even more, but here it says that the fathers visit iniquity against their children. Which parents? The Philistines? The Canaanites? Or those of God's people?

How could there be iniquity between parents and their children, and what is that iniquity? Think on that, and when we determine that, we can easily understand why there shouldn't be any images. Why there should be no images.

And together with this, there is another verse—very important verse, and we will end with this verse: 2nd Corinthians chapter 4:18. "While we look not at the things which are seen," Paul presents us the prevention that is found in God's law in Greek terminology, in the Greek culture.

"While we look not at the things which are seen," what is it that we see? What we can see. Have we learned to see that which is not seen? It continues: "But at the things which are not seen." We have to see what is not seen, because in revelation, that which is invisible is the true and what is visible in this world is all temporal.

May the Lord bless you. Let us pray:

Dear Heavenly Father,

In Your wisdom You have revealed to us the way of prevention. You have created Your law, Lord, and You have revealed it to us in Your Word with one purpose—to redeem us; to restore us; and to renew Your image in our lives. Lord, we live in a totally depraved world and we do not know all the things that go on in this world. One day when we will be with You, we will understand what this world really was. But Lord, teach us how to walk in this world, looking at the invisible. Amen.