

Truth and Contentment

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Date: 10 December 2017

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[0 : 0 0] well occasionally people think some instructions don't sound too important when they actually are so one third grade girl called hope was told to name some shapes but she didn't take much notice of the next instruction which said using the names on the page and so when she received her paper she named the shapes bob sam tedison and so on instead up on the top right hand corner square rhombus and the like today we come to our final two commandments as i said which are about not lying and not coveting and i wonder whether for some people and i even wonder whether for the jews whether these were the kind of instructions that they didn't really listen to because they don't seem as important as the other commandments do they i mean if you had to choose i guess two of the least important one i mean they're all important but if you had to choose two of the least important ones you wouldn't do the ones about god were you that's the first four you go and say god's not serious and then you've got uh don't kill that's pretty serious don't no adultery that's pretty serious but then you come down to not lying and not coveting and you kind of think well everyone kind of lies in fact in 2002 a study done in the university of massachusetts uh worked with 240 university students and they went in pairs and they would have a 10 minute conversation they were observed and then interviewed afterwards and the study found that 60 percent of them lied at least once in that 10 minute conversation at least once now maybe that's just a university students but then even we kind of distinguish between lies and then there's the white lies that don't really matter you know no biggie that kind of thing and with coveting well it's just to do with the heart it's a bit hard to police coveting and you know everyone desires things it's a bit hard to observe and the like interestingly the ninth and tenth commandments are the only two commandments that specifically mention our neighbor and so i wonder i've got nothing to back this up so take it with a massive grain of salt but i wonder whether god deliberately talks about this because he knew these commandments might appear to israel as well not as important as the other ones when in actual fact they have serious consequences for loving our neighbors either way israel were to obey them in response to god saving them we heard that from the bible reading at the 10 commandments start with a reminder of what god has done for israel remember i'm the lord your god who rescued you from the land of egypt and so in response to saving them and making them his people israel were to obey his commands and there's a similar dynamic at work for us i mean god has saved us not from egypt but from sin and in thankful response we are to obey god as well but as i've been saying over the last few weeks because christ has fulfilled the old testament law then we don't have to fulfill it we don't at one level have to obey it we've been set free from the old testament law and yet christ did not come to abolish the law either it still has a place for us and so as i showed you um and this is the last one so a bit of a recap as i showed you at the beginning the old testament law teaches us three things at number one it teaches us how uh what god's character is like and so you got all these laws about holiness which teaches us that god cares about holiness yeah he's a holy god and so on at number two it teaches us about jesus and why he has to be a priest and a sacrifice all that begins and has its background in the old testament law it helps us to understand jesus better and thirdly the old testament law teaches us how to love god and our neighbor

which as christians we are still to do and so when we come to these old testament laws which seem random and bizarre to us i gave you four questions that you could use to still find meaning and application from it to help us love god and our neighbors and so we'll use those four questions today uh and we're at point one in your outlines and verse 16 in your bibles so exodus chapter 20 verse 16 so here we come to the ninth commandment and it says you shall not give false testimony against your neighbor and so we begin with two of our questions who does this help us to love uh god or others well it's quite clearly others it mentions our neighbor how is the second question well by not bearing false testimony it's pretty straightforward with the 10 commandments isn't it now

there are three things to notice here first the command is against not just lying but all sorts of false speech actually the word for false here does mean lie but it can also mean deceive you know telling half truths and not the whole truth so help me god what's more when the 10 commandments are repeated in the book of deuteronomy a different hebrew word for false is used which means empty or meaningless worthless and so this commandment is broader than just lying it refers to all sorts of false speech with a blatant lie a half truth an empty statement and even a white lie on a parenting website some parents admitted telling their children white lies and one father admitted this on the next slide he said to his child daddy cannot hear when it's dark so call mummy if you wake up at night apparently got away with it for some time and on the next slide a mother admitted my son and i spent 10 minutes looking for his chocolate coins when i knew all along i'd eaten them the day before it's a bit mean isn't it now we may not think much about it you know i suppose it's a bit of fun but it's still false speech isn't it especially if you don't let the kid in on the joke and often white lies lead to darker lies don't they the second thing to notice though is that this commandment also includes our intention so the commandment says do not bear false testimony against your neighbor that is the command includes not just the content of our speech whether it's true or false it also includes the intention of my speech am i working against my neighbor or not am i seeking to tear them down for personal gain or speak the truth for their good and so it includes things like gossiping and slandering and we know that because the old testament picks these things up so for example the next slide levticus 16 verse 19 says do not go about spreading slander among your people and the third thing though to notice is that while this command was against all sorts of false speech including gossiping and slandering in the old testament it was particularly against false speech in the courtroom oh we can see this by the way it talks about being uh giving false testimony and in fact the word forgive in verse 16 is literally answer and so the idea is say you actually in a courtroom and someone asks you a question about a defendant and you have to give testimony or answer with testimony that is not false and again we can see this when we look at the other laws in the old testament connected to this commandment as on the next slide from uh exodus 23 which is which is over the page in your bibles too but it says do not spread a false report there's the slander but then it continues to focus on the courtroom do not help a guilty person by being a malicious witness are you shall so when you give testimony in a lawsuit do not pervert justice by siding with the crowd and do not show favoritism to a poor person in a lawsuit on the other hand do not deny justice to the poor person in a lawsuit either have nothing to do with false charge and do not put an innocent or honest person to death for i will not acquit the guilty you see this commandment forbids false speech against your neighbor in every situation but particularly in the courtroom situation that's where the weight of the commands fall and that's because in ancient israel there were no surveillance cameras no dna testing no finger printing their justice system relied heavily on the evidence of witnesses indeed god was so concerned to avoid injustice that there had to be at least two or three witnesses before anyone could be sentenced as on the next slide generally chapter 19 we read one witness is not enough to convict anyone accused of any crime or offense they may have committed a matter must be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses which is particularly important when it came to the death penalty as the verse down below says you see we might not think that this command is all that serious something lying white lies you know it's not as bad as murder you know killing or adultery but it is because their testimony could actually sentence people even to death truth really mattered and so much so that we also read on the next slide in jerome 19 that if a malicious witness takes a stand to accuse someone of a crime and if the witness proves to be a liar giving false testimony against his fellow israelite well then due to the false witness as that witness intended to do to the other party you see truth really matters for the good of others well that's what the command's about but before we apply it to ourselves we need to see what the new testament does which is point two on your outline and as we do we see that the new testament focuses less on the courtroom situation and more in life in general so on the next slide from ephesians 4 we read this just a note for our visitors by the way we normally work through a particular passage here at holy trinity but we occasionally do topicals which require us to jump around a bit so please bear with us paul writes in ephesians 4 you were taught with regard to your former way of life to put off your old self which has been corrupted by its deceitful desires and to be made new in the attitude of your minds and to put on the new self created to be like god in true righteousness and holiness therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to your neighbor for we are all members of one body you see when we become christians we say goodbye to our old life and we are given a new spiritual life in christ we put on a new self that's why

natasha wanted to get fully dunked today because that has the imagery or the symbolism of going down dying to your old way of life and then coming up putting on the new life as a christian and now that god has given us this new life in christ and we are to live it out by putting off the old ways and putting on the new ways and indeed paul if you just go back to that slide uh it says that we are to put on the new self which is created to be like god as i said last week that is we are to reflect god's likeness and god is a god who does not lie so nor are we to lie indeed as christians who follow christ we are to reflect his likeness too after all jesus said i am the way the truth and the life and so as christians we are to we are god's children who are to reflect the family likeness speaking the truth like our heavenly father

god and like our big brother christ and if we don't speak the truth then we're actually reflecting a different father's likeness you know who the devil jesus calls the devil in john 8 the father of lies and so we had to put off our old way of life which told lies and put on the new way of life which speaks truthfully to one another and that includes not just getting rid of blatant lies but also those polite lies that seek to save face you know those ones yeah so for example people are invited out and they often say i'd love to go but i'm really sorry i've got something else on when really what they mean is i'd hate to go and i've got nothing else on or christmas is coming up when people get gifts that they don't always want and but people still say oh more socks and undies just what i wanted when it's the last thing they wanted rather we're to put off falsehood and simply say thank you for the kind offer but no thanks to going out or we're to say thank you for your gift and leave it at that we're to put off that kind of worldly false speech with its blatant and polite lies and instead we had to put on truthfulness so if we are late or forget to do something we don't make up an excuse to save face if there's a reason that is true then of course say that but we don't lie rather we own up and apologize i remember the principal of the bible college i was studying at wanted to meet with me and some other students um i wasn't in trouble just for the record uh but um he wanted to talk about a paper or something or other and he was going to bring it to the meeting and uh he didn't now at that point he could have said oh look um i'm really sorry i went to the photocopier but someone grabbed me so i couldn't uh photocopy a paper for you or he could have said oh the archbishop called and you can't say no the archbishop or whatever uh but he didn't choose to lie and save face he just simply said i'm very sorry i just forgot and he owned up to it and and that kind of integrity actually actually is is more endearing isn't it you see we had to speak the truth and not lie to save face nor even avoid persecution i was asked one day as straight out by a non-christian if i really thought uh whether people who did not believe in jesus would go to hell and my first instinct was to try and avoid the answer altogether or at least massage the truth so it didn't sound too bad why well because i wanted to avoid persecution and i wanted to be you know nice and get on with this guy but we cannot do that especially in those circumstances and not just because god actually does say in the bible that sadly people who don't want anything to do with him well he'll give them what he wants what they want a life without him which is hell but we also to specially tell them the truth because that's what they need to hear so that they might not end up there but turn to christ in repentance and faith as natasha said she's done this morning and so we're to put off falsehood and instead say yes that's what the bible does say but the bible also says that jesus died for you so that if you trust in him you don't have to go to hell you can have certain hope of heaven instead you see we need to speak the truth and particularly in that situation because the truth will actually set them free spiritually of course we need to remember that we are to speak the truth in love and with grace after all it is possible to speak the truth in an unloving way i remember not long after michelle and i were married michelle asked me if i liked the dress she was wearing and i said no i told the truth i learnt very quickly that was not very loving i could have said well my love you make it look even better than it really is

or perhaps i'm not a big fan of the color which is really the case you see we need to watch not only what we say but how we say it it's interesting that in john chapter 1 jesus is described as being full of grace and truth and sometimes people are so full of grace that they won't ever stand up for the truth but sometimes people are so full of the truth there is no grace in the way they say it we need both grace and truth we need to speak the truth in love and this is especially so if we want to bear witness to the truth about jesus i mean if we don't speak the truth in life then why would anyone listen to us when we speak the truth about christ in fact they have every reason not to listen to us not to trust us whether we had to be known as people and even parents who speak the truth so that others including our children might believe us when we speak of christ for the truth of christ really does matter it is a life and death issue eternal life and death issue well the last commandment gets

to the heart behind all the other commandments which is point three in your outlines and exodus 20 verse 17 in your bibles the 10th commandment says you shall not covet your neighbor's house you shall not covet your neighbor's wife or his male or female servant his ox or donkey or anything that belongs to your neighbor so point three is who does this commandment help us to love well it's clearly others our neighbor although we'll see it actually includes god as well but we'll get to that later how are we how are we to love others well by not coveting what is theirs the word coveting here literally is desire so this commandment is about what we desire or long for that is not ours all the other commandments about what we do with our mouths our eyes our hands but this one is all about what we do with our hearts our desires but does that mean then we cannot desire anything i mean am i not allowed to desire juicy steaks and cabaret chocolate am i not allowed to desire a sleep in or a holiday well of course we can desire those sorts of things in fact the bible uses this same word for covet in a positive way so for example on the next slide from psalm 19 it talks about coveting or desiring the word of god more than gold or philippians 1 poor desires or covets to be with christ and so it can be used in a positive or negative way so what does it mean to use it in a negative way what is this commandment actually forbidding well the commandment itself gives us a clue i think notice how it talks about not coveting your neighbor's house not coveting your neighbor's wife or his male or female servants or anything that belongs to your neighbor it's all about desiring what belongs to them you see wishing we had what they have it's about being discontent with what we've got and envying what they've got i saw a really a photo which i think kind of captured this pretty well it's on the next slide i'm sure he was happy with his icy pole at one point until he saw his sister presumably it's being discontent with what we've got and then envying what they've got that's what it's about now this is that more than just visiting your neighbor's place for for a meal and thinking oh that was a really nice meal i desire that recipe or you know oh that's a really good way to stack your dishes with that drainer i might get one from target or wherever it's desiring what they have so much so that you're discontent with what you've got

[20 : 15] and you start longing for even chasing after what they have instead it starts to control your thoughts and your actions it's seeing your friend with the latest iphone and becoming obsessed in getting one too although i heard it's not working very well is that right i can't remember it's seeing how many friends this person has on facebook or in real life and wishing you had that many too that they were all your friends it's seeing someone else's better health and wishing that it was your better health and seeing someone's house and wishing it was your house and dreaming about it and what you'd put where and how you might do it differently better than they did and seeing someone else's spouse and wishing they were your spouse and seeing someone succeed and wishing that was you or seeing someone else's gifts and wishing they were your gifts my parents are down from sydney and they are here today and they came to church last sunday and they haven't heard me preach a whole lot but after hearing me preach last sunday at lunchtime their first comment was gee isn't that vj good value thanks mum dad great to have you with us no no to be fair they did

I'm being a bit cheeky they did encourage me too but it's you know it's me wishing I had that smooth slightly British accent that suave polished presentation or whatever it is it's very easy to envy others isn't it but the problem with coveting and envy well it's threefold first such coveting only ends up eating away at us so Proverbs 14 verse 30 on the next slide says it quite aptly I think a heart at peace gives life to the body but envy rots the bones and it does one of Aesop's or Aesop's fables Aesop was a Greek storyteller who told lots of stories with morals to it and this one is not a particularly pleasant story but it makes the point it was of a man who had a rather envious neighbour and this neighbour prayed to their god

Jupiter or whoever it was and the god said look I will give you your heart's desire but whatever I give you your neighbour will receive twice as much and this man's envy had corrupted him rotted him so much so that you know what he prayed in this fable he prayed that one of his eyes might be gouged out simply so that his neighbour might lose them both isn't that horrible and the point of the fable is the proverb that envy rots the bones and also means secondly that it leads to not loving our neighbour like the fable shows I mean how can we love our neighbour when we are preoccupied with wanting their stuff instead it can lead us to resenting our neighbour or even each other here at church wanting to tear them down rather than build them up or perhaps coveting in envy might even lead us to break the other commandments take King David from the Bible for example when he saw beautiful

Bathsheba one night he wanted her he coveted her desired her even though she was the wife of one of his soldiers called Uriah but because he desired her that led to him taking her which broke the eighth commandment no stealing then he slept with her and broke the seventh commandment no adultery and then he had her husband Uriah killed breaking the sixth commandment no murder and then he lived a lie for some time before confessing to God breaking the ninth commandment no false testimony you see coveting opens the doors to a whole cupboard full of sins doesn't it which is unloving towards our neighbour but third it's also unloving towards God you see when we covet we are saying that what God has given us is not good enough and our hearts long for and become devoted to this thing that someone else has that we must have rather than serving God we then chase after this thing in other words this thing replaces God it takes our affections and our desires away from God and that's unloving towards God isn't it so what does all this mean for us well let's see what the

New Testament does before we apply it to ourselves which is point four the New Testament pretty much reiterates what we've seen already in our second reading from 1 Timothy we heard Paul tell Timothy I think it's on the next slide that the love of money verse 10 there not money itself but the love of money coveting wealth is a root or a cause of all kinds of evil it leads to all sorts of other sins as we've already seen what's more it rots you and so some people eager for the money have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs it's just like we saw unloving towards neighbours or verse 9 above there it unloving by plunging people into ruin and destruction we covet so we lie steal and cheat and plunge others into ruin and destruction you see it rots us and it's unloving towards our neighbour just as we've seen or on the next slide it's also unloving towards God and so Paul says he says covetousness or greed is idolatry the thing we chase after becomes an idol we worship instead of God and that is unloving towards God so you see the New Testament backs up what we've seen in the Old Testament but it does more than that it also then tells us the antidote to coveting and the antidote to coveting is contentment as Paul said earlier in the passage on the next slide he says godliness with contentment is great gain you see gaining money from our neighbours stuff it only lasts a limited time it's limited gain because we cannot take any of it when we die see for we have brought nothing into the world and we can take nothing out of the world but godliness with contentment is great gain because it has value for both this life and the life to come godliness prepares us for our life to come and contentment helps us live this life now because the world teaches us to be discontent doesn't it

[27 : 08] I mean take the world of advertising a few years ago we had those jeep ads on do you remember those jeep ads I mentioned this before we'll play a little clip just so you remember the music I still remember that they were everywhere to the point where our kids even started saying you guys should get a jeep mum and dad very successful campaign now there's nothing wrong with having a jeep one of my warden has a jeep but you see what the marketing people have done is tapped into our human nature which is to covet and to envy to be discontent and to desire what others have and so on the jeep ads the people with the jeep are always happy and the people without are always sad oh I take the TV shows like Better Homes and Gardens it's all about coveting other people's homes and gardens they're getting being discontent with yours so that you might spend money and have theirs but imagine if the world started living by the principle of Christian contentment

Better Homes and Gardens would be renamed as Perfectly Adequate Homes and Gardens people who owned a jeep would look just as happy as people who owned a Toyota or whatever else you see contentment is the antidote to coveting and we see this in the last reading I want to take us to so turn with me in your Bibles to Philippians chapter 4 and we'll finish here chapter 4 verse 10 Paul writes to the Philippians I rejoice greatly in the Lord that at last you renewed your concern for me indeed you were concerned you just had no opportunity to show it I'm not saying this because I am in need for I've learned to be content whatever the circumstances I know what it is to be in need and I know what it is to have plenty I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation whether well fed or hungry whether living in plenty or in want I can do all this through him who gives me strength now they're reasonably well known verses aren't they and you see what Paul is saying he doesn't it doesn't matter what situation he's in he doesn't cover it because he's content but notice in verse 11 that Paul says he has learned to be content whatever the situation it didn't happen straight away it was a process that seemed to take some time but what helped him to learn this contentment was the secret the secret to being content verse 12 he also learnt this

although I think more quickly so what is this secret that helped him learn to be content well it's Christ actually Christ is the one whom Paul has come to learn of and trust in and if we'd read the whole letter we would see that for Paul Christ is everything in fact chapter 3 verse 8 Paul considers everything else as garbage that's the word it uses chapter 3 verse 8 garbage compared to knowing Christ the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Christ is the one chapter 3 verse 20 who has secured for Paul a citizenship in heaven Christ is the one chapter 3 verse 21 who will transform Paul's lowly body to be like his glorious body Christ is the one who chapter 4 verse 13 gives Paul strength to be content you see Paul has learned of Jesus Christ and what he has in Christ and that helps him to be content no matter the situation Michelle's godmother has lived in a caravan for the last 20 years because she cannot afford anything else in fact when she sends cars to Michelle now they are often recycled because she can't afford new ones she needs to save every dollar she has chronic health issues her husband passed away last year and so there's lots she could covet isn't there money a home health a husband and yet she doesn't and so whenever we receive a letter yes sure she expresses her hardships she asks for prayer but she also expresses her joyful contentment in Christ you see she trusts in Jesus and so she knows that Christ has secured for her citizenship in heaven that will be more than enough more than make up for any loss here on earth so for her why covet earthly things now when you have so much more on the way for her to be like coveting a child's toy house when you're about to enter a real mansion what's the point oh sure life is hard but she also know that

Christ has secured for her access to God who gives strength and help in times of need and that Christ has secured God as her heavenly father who will never leave her nor forsake her it doesn't mean life will be easy far from it but it does mean that God will help her through it and so despite every earthly reason to covet amazingly she's content in Christ well despite these two commandments perhaps appearing to be the least important they are actually very important truth matters coveting and contentment matters in fact that's the desire that stands behind all the other commandments and they help us to love not just our neighbor but our God by pursuing both truth and contentment so let's pray we would do both let's pray our gracious heavenly father we do thank you for your old testament law which sometimes appears so random to us particularly the commands that are not part of the ten but father we thank you that it still has meaning and help for us to know how to love you and our neighbors and father this morning we pray that you would help us to be people who pursue both truth and contentment that we might be witnesses to the lord Jesus Christ who died for us and rose again we pray it in his name amen hello