

Walking with Jesus Through Sinai:
 Seeking Moral Clarity in an Age of Chaos with the 10 Commandments
 CPC Adult Sunday Studies Spring 2025
 21 - Sixth Commandment, part 2

On the Character of the Heart in the 6th Commandment

Review: We began our study of the 6th commandment looking at the basics of what “unlawfully kill” means, its foundations in who God is and how he has created us, and Jesus’ teaching on anger as its roots. Today, we’ll expand on Jesus’ teaching, looking more into the command’s implications for our character. In coming weeks, we’ll look at more controversial ethical issues around life and death.

Exodus 20:13 - “You shall not murder” - includes unlawful and unintentional killing

Expanding our Vision

WLC 135

“The duties required in the sixth commandment are, all **careful studies, and lawful endeavours, to preserve the life of ourselves and others** by resisting all thoughts and purposes, subduing all passions, and avoiding all occasions, temptations, and practices, which **tend to the unjust taking away the life** of any; by:

- “just defence thereof against violence” -
- “**patient** bearing of the hand of God, **quietness** of mind, **cheerfulness** of spirit;”
 - How does this stem from violating *Do not murder*? Rather than patiently enduring God’s providence, we may take it into our own hands to take what is not ours, for example. The assumption is that God alone gives life and God alone ought to take it away. If we’re not content in mind or cheerful in spirit, then we are not sure God has placed the circumstance in our life.
- “a **sober use** of meat, drink, physic, sleep, labor, and recreation;”
- “by **charitable** thoughts, **love**, compassion, meekness, gentleness, kindness;”

- again, dependent upon God's providence, we are called to seek the life of those in our life, which does so with love, gentleness, etc. The fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5.22) comes from the source of life and works towards life. The opposite of kindness, for example, stems from wrath.
- "peaceable, mild, and courteous speeches and behavior: forbearance, readiness to be **reconciled**, patient bearing and forgiving of injuries, and requiting **good for evil**;"
 - because we're seeking each other's life and goodness, we will meet evil with good and want to seek reconciliation, not condemnation, which is rooted in wrath.
- "comforting and succoring the distressed, and protecting and defending the innocent."

WLC 136 - "The sins forbidden in the sixth commandment are, all taking away the life of ourselves, or of others, except in case of public justice, lawful war, or necessary defence; the neglecting or withdrawing the lawful and necessary means of preservation of life; sinful anger, hatred, envy, desire of revenge; all excessive passions, distracting cares; immoderate use of meat, drink, labor, and recreations; provoking words; oppression, quarreling, striking, wounding, and whatsoever else tends to the destruction of the life of any."

- Basically, the opposite of the above, from WLC 135.

Overall Points:

1. *Avoidance of Death is not an ultimate goal.*

1. This will become obvious when we consider end-of-life ethical issues, but the point is **not** that we pursue life absolutely as an abstract goal, no matter what. We honor God as the giver of life, and pursue the kind of life that He wants. The martyrs display this truth most clearly. For end-of-life care decisions, we would *not* say it's the *only* Christian option to *always* take extreme measures to save a life. At the same time, we do not belong to ourselves, and we are to steward our own lives and those around us with a great respect for the sanctity that God has bestowed upon life.

2. *"Do not murder" ultimately teaches "love your neighbor" and "act like Jesus"*

1. This is what all the commandments will point us toward, in different circumstances.

3. *"From womb to tomb" is a robust vision of a "pro-life" agenda*
 1. We have to be careful of our cultural and political blindspots that selectively choose which issues to focus on to the detriment of a fuller vision
4. *God calls us to a character of strength and gentleness (Isa. 40.9-11, 2Cor. 10.1, Matt. 11.28-30)*
 1. "Gentleness is stooping down to help someone. God continually stoops down to help us, and He wants us to do the same: to be sensitive to the rights and feelings of others" (Bridges, *Practice of Godliness*, 185).
 1. Consider these synonyms to gentleness - considerateness, a forbearing spirit, "yieldedness, reasonableness, big-heartedness, geniality, humane" (189).

SLOTH (Acedia) - Resistance to the Demands of Love

From Deyoung's *Glittering Vices*

Be careful to simply oppose this to what our modern era calls diligence or industriousness.

Surprising parts of Sloth

- "Busyness and workaholism were not virtuous but rather sloth's classic symptoms." (90). "People with this vice often pour tremendous effort and energy into the difficult task of distracting themselves from the unhappiness of their real condition... people with acedia can be tireless, overworked, even restless." (99)
- It's a spiritual vice, not just a vice with a carnal object, but one that gets to **deeper religious commitments**
- It means "**lack of care**, dejection, feeling of oppressiveness or even disgust. . . . An inner resistance and coldness toward our spiritual calling . . . an experience of staying committed to God as an intolerable burden" (92)
- **Restlessness** often accompanies it because it stems from "a choice not to commit, a refusal to give ourselves wholly to God and then stay the course." It's always easier to escape and move and distract!

Acedia is an "aversion to the divine good in us. . . . We attempt to settle for being less than what we truly are."

It denies the work of the Holy Spirit within us. It is a “habit of the heart. Even though acedia typically weighs us down with feelings of sadness, like all vices it and its symptoms ultimately express the cumulative effect of our own decision. . . . the vice consists in **well-entrenched and willful habits of resistance, even as love is fundamentally a series of choices that add up to a commitment.**” (97)

“We fail to heed the call to love God and follow him wholeheartedly when this would draw us out of our comfort zone. Instead, we shrink back, electing to stagnate rather than mature. ‘Pusillanimity is a dangerous habit to acquire because through it we not only lose our taste for what is truly good, but also **grow comfortable with mediocrity.** [Such a person] never has to grow, never has to change or be challenged because he avoids any goals or commitments that would call him beyond himself in sacrifice, goodness, or love.’” (100)

Sloth as the other side of the coin of pride - The *humility* of the Son of God unmask our *pride*. On the other hand, the *exaltation* of the Son of Man unmask, in turn, our *sloth*.

“As reconciling grace is not merely *justifying*, but also wholly and utterly *sanctifying* and awakening and establishing grace, so sin has not merely the heroic form of pride but also, in complete antithesis yet profound correspondence, the quite unheroic and trivial form of sloth. In other words, it has the form, not only of evil action, but also of **evil inaction**; not only of the rash arrogance which is forbidden and reprehensible, but also of the tardiness and failure which are equally forbidden and reprehensible. It is also the counter-movement to the elevation which has come to man from God Himself in Jesus Christ. The sinner is not merely Prometheus or Lucifer [prideful]. He is also a lazy-bones, a sluggard, a good-for-nothing, a slow-coach and a loafer. **In the one case, he stands bitterly in need of humiliation; in the other he stands no less bitterly in need of exaltation.**”
- Karl Barth

In Christ, we have been exalted to the “right hand of God” (Eph. 2.6)! What dignity and glory! What would it look like to appreciate this and remember it more in our lives?