



THE SHEPHERD'S VOICE

*Daily Devotion at Zion + August 23, 2020 AD + **Pentecost Season***

This Week: The Ten Commandments

Our Lord gives everything He gives for your good, and the goodness He gives is always more than anyone can imagine.

He gave the ten commandments to Moses to govern the hearts and behaviors of Israel, and so the people of God have used them ever since. Yet their goodness overflows even more. Not only has God given the commandments to order our thoughts, words, and deeds, but He's also given them to reveal His own character, to publish His promises about the future, and to strengthen the love between Him and you.

The commandments are packed full of grace.

They surely teach us how to live, and they expose our sin where we have failed to follow their way. Even that more solemn task is gracious in its way, preparing us for the balm of our Lord's absolution or forgiveness. But they also give us a beautiful picture of who God is in His holiness, and what holiness He shares with you. "You shall have no other gods before me"—that statement is both command and promise. He will be our God, through thick and thin.

We therefore use the commandments in our devotional life, learning not only to follow them but also to love them and cherish them as food for the soul.

About the Cover Art

The painter of this work is unknown! Or perhaps we should say, known only to God. We know that it come from France, some time in the 1800s, and was used as an illustration for Bibles or Bible storybooks. It depicts an idealized form of the Father giving the commandments to Moses atop Mt. Sinai, surrounded by clouds and lightening, as the Scriptures describe. It also places a triangle behind the Father to confess that the God who spoke to Moses is the same as the God of the Church, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Using the Ten Commandments

Traditional Christian teaching assigns two purposes to the law of God: 1) teaching us proper moral behavior, and 2) showing us where we have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. With those two functions come two ways to pray, and then there is yet a third use.

First, they teach us to ask for God's Holy Spirit, that we may keep this law both in our hearts and in our daily labor. Second, they teach us to repent and seek mercy. Indeed, they provide us a handy little summary to use each evening, reviewing where we have sinned in the day just ending and confessing it to God.

Yet the commandments also create hope in us: the hope of being holy as God is holy. They point us forward, to our liberation from sin, and thus they point us to Jesus and His grace, teaching us to praise, thank, and adore Him for doing for us what we cannot do for ourselves. Turn the page for more!

Daily Readings for the Week of August 30 (Pentecost 13)

S Judges 11:1-11, 29-40
2 Cor 11:21b-31
Mark 4:35-41

Acts 6:15-7:16
John 4:27-42

M Judges 12:1-7
Acts 5:12-26
John 3:1-21

F Judges 14:20-15:20
Acts 7:17-29
John 4:43-54

T Judges 13:1-15
Acts 5:27-42
John 3:22-36

Sa Judges 16:1-14
Acts 7:30-43
John 5:1-18

W Judges 13:15-24
Acts 6:1-15
John 4:1-26

Th Judges 14:1-19

For those using the For All the Saints books, these readings correspond to pages 430-469 in Volume IV. To learn more about For All the Saints and other devotionals, please see the back page.

Praying the Commandments

Martin Luther once wrote a letter of counsel to his barber, Peter, advising him how to pray. In it, he gave examples of how to use the commandments for: 1) learning, 2) thanksgiving, 3) repentance, and 3) petition, or request. Here is one example:

The Seventh Commandment: "You shall not steal." First, I can learn here that I must not take my neighbor's property from him or possess it against his will, either in secret or openly. I must not be false or dishonest in business, service, or work, nor profit by fraud, but must support myself by the sweat of my brow¹⁰ and eat my bread in honor. Furthermore, I must see to it that in any of the above-named ways my neighbor is not defrauded, just as I wish for myself. I also learn in this commandment that God, in his fatherly solicitude, sets a protective hedge around my goods and solemnly prohibits anyone to steal from me. Where that is ignored, he has imposed a penalty Where that cannot be done, God himself metes out punishment and they become beggars in the end, as the proverb says, "Who steals in his youth, goes begging in old age," or, "Stolen gain goes down the drain."

In addition I give thanks for his steadfast goodness in that he has given such excellent teachings, assurance, and protection to me and to all the world. If it were not for his protection, not a penny or a crumb of bread would be left in the house.

Third, I confess my sins and ingratitude in such instances where I have wronged, deprived, or cheated anyone in my life.

Fourth, I ask that he grant to me and all the world grace to learn from this commandment, to ponder it, and to become better people, so that there may be less theft, robbery, usury, cheating, and injustice and that the Judgment Day, for which all saints and the whole creation pray ,Romans 8 [:20-23], shall soon bring this to an end. Amen

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