

## —Westminster Shorter Catechism—

### *Lesson 66—What does the First Commandment require? Q.45-46*

As we begin, we need to remember the unity of the Law of God. Hodge, “The first table includes the second, in that if we love God, then we must love each other. And the first commandment necessitates and embraces all the rest in the first table, in that if we’re to glorify God as our God, then we must render Him proper worship and must reverence His name and His day.”

The first table of the Law of God is about the worship we owe God as our God. In particular, as the Second Commandment concerns the *form* of divine worship, the Third the *manner* of divine worship, the Fourth the *time* set apart for divine worship, so the First is prior to all these in establishing the *object* of divine worship. This means while each commandment instructs and obliges us to particular duties, the first commandment ties us to give obedience to them all as *the whole Law of the one God* we’re to own, love, worship, and obey.

#### **The duties commanded**

- I. The first commandment requires us to own GOD, and Him only, for that Deity, to whom all love and worship and praise are due. It requires us so to know GOD as to be persuaded (by sovereign grace) to love, fear, trust, serve, and adore Him. Thus four things are especially commanded.
  - A. We’re to know and own GOD, and Him only, as God, and to sanctify Him in our hearts and give Him His full privilege above all His creatures, Dt 6.4-6. He’s to be acknowledged for what He is and answerably worshiped, Ps 100.
    1. It’s a command to *know Him as He’s revealed Himself in His Word, and according to that knowledge, to compose all our actions*, Gen 17.1; 1Kgs 2.4; Ps 9.10; Jn 14.9-10.
    2. It’s a command not to be ignorant of our God, for an ignorant heart is a sinful heart, Hos 5.4; Rom 3.10-12; Ps 14.1-4.
    3. It’s a command to study God’s Word and to pray for wisdom and seek for understanding because the perfection of knowledge will bring the perfection of holiness. *Believers mature in holiness as they mature in knowledge*, Rom 12.2; Eph 4.11-16; Tit 2.11-14; 2Tim 3.16-16. The immature are ignorant, and know not as they ought, and therefore walk in many an error that could and should be avoided as they grow in the grace and knowledge of Christ, 1Pet 2.1-3; 2Pet 3.18; Eph 4.17-24. As long as we know God only in part, so long will we be like Him only in part. But the command is to know Him in order that, by grace, we may be conformed to Him, Phil 3.16; 4.9.
  - B. We’re to love Him as our God, Dt 6.4-6.
    1. This is the chief duty and the best fruit of our knowledge of God, for if we know God as He is in Christ, we cannot but love Him. Love for God is the fulfilling and best fruition of this commandment, Mt 22.37-38.
    2. Love for God works cheerfulness and constancy into our obedience, patience into our suffering, and makes all our services acceptable to God. Love for God causes us to rejoice in the means of grace by which He communes with us, Ps 63.1-4, obey His commandments because it pleases Him, Jn 14.15, love His people because He loves them, 1Jn 5.1, long for His appearing, Phil 3.20, and hate what He hates, 1Jn 2.15; Js 4.4. If we cannot see these marks of love for God in our lives, then we don’t love God. But if we do love God, then these are the fruits we should seek to cultivate.
  - C. We’re to fear Him as God, Josh 24.14-15; Ecc 12.13; Isa 8.13.
    1. Just as the knowledge of God’s goodness, mercy, and truth inflames the heart with a love for God, so the knowledge of God’s greatness, power, majesty, and excellence inflames the heart with an awe-full reverence and great fear of His Majesty.

2. God's grace casts off from our hearts that slavish, hellish fear that runs from Him, and works in us that holy fear that draws us toward Him in worship, adoration, and holiness. It's a fear mingled with love and confidence, Heb 10.19-22; 12.28-29.
  3. To fear God is to give Him the praise of His omnipotence, mercy, truth, and all other attributes. And if we do this, and fear God aright, we'll never fear man. When we fear man, we're ascribing to man the greatness, majesty, and power that belong only to God. But when we fear God, it cures our fear of man, our fear of danger, and our fear of any necessity, because God, our God, is greater than all and able to sustain, provide, and deliver us in all conditions as He pleases.
  4. Moreover, this fear of God leads directly to obeying all His commandments, Dt 8.6; Josh 24.14-15; Ecc 12.13; Pr 8.13. It was because Joseph feared God in his heart that he hated wickedness in his heart, and it was because he hated it in his heart, that he would never practice it in his life, Gen 39.9. The reason men sin as they do is because they don't fear God as they should, Rom 3.10-18.
  5. Also, the fear of God leads to all the blessings of life, Pr 3.7-8. The way to lack no good thing in life is to live as a God-fearer, Dt 6.2; Pr 10.27; 14.26-27; 19.23; 29.25.
- D. We're to trust in Him as our God, Ps 4.5; Pr 3.5-6; Jer 17.7-8.
1. We're to put our full confidence in God and rely wholly upon Him and Him alone. His Word is to command our reason. His character is to be enough for our faith.
  2. It's the foolishness of the men of this world that they trust in means and not in God, and their means always disappoint them because they are means and not God.
  3. But it's the wisdom of God's people that we trust in God alone; Ps 20.7-8; 33.13-22. And we do so because we know that those who rely upon Him are assured that *nothing* will be allowed to hurt them and that instead, He'll make *all things* work together for their good, Rom 8.28.
  4. Moreover, if we trust in God, we'll be diligent to use all the means His providence provides while putting no trust in the means themselves. And when we trust in God we won't be discouraged if we have no means at hand, because He's just as able to work without them as with them, 1Sam 14.6.
  5. This is a chief point of our happiness, namely, when we can trust God alone *as God*. For as much as we seek our comfort and strength in the creature, so much is our heart taken away from God. But when we can trust in none but God as God, then we can have just as much peace with or without means. When God is our trust and stay, to have means is to be no better off than to not have them, and to lose them is to be no worse than we were when we had them.

### Applications

- I. Leighton, "Set yourself to know, love, and worship this God. Labor that there may be less of the world, and less of yourself, and more of God in your heart, more settled and fixed thoughts of Him *as God*, and more delight in Him *as your God*," Rom 12.1-2.
- II. The only thing that can hurt us in life is *unbelief*, the unbelief that refuses to take God as our God and instead makes Gods of the creatures and puts our hope in them. When we do this, *everything* works to our ruin, shame, disappointment, and misery. But when we "know and acknowledge GOD to be the only true God, and our God, and we worship and glorify Him accordingly," *nothing* in all life will be able to hurt us but will instead be made to bless us, Rom 8.28-29.
- III. The surest way to greater holiness in all of life is to begin at this commandment, Rom 3.10-18.
  - A. Beginning here, with a believing submission to God as God and our God, will so captivate the heart with the greatness and love of God, that our heart will be drawn out in love to Him as God, our mind will receive His Word as the Word of God, and our will will yield to His commandments and to His providences as the ways and works of God, until our entire self is given up to Him because He is God and our entire life is lived for Him because He is our God.
  - B. Wickedness and ungodliness begin with a throwing off of the yoke of this commandment and cannot be purged or mortified but by the bringing of the heart under it, Josh 24.14-15; Ecc 12.13.