



CONCLUSION TO THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

What does God say about all these commandments?

He says, "I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me, but showing love to a thousand generations of those who love me and keep my commandments."

What does this mean?

God threatens to punish all who transgress these commandments. Therefore we should fear his anger and not disobey what he commands.

But he promises grace and every blessing to all who keep these commandments. Therefore we should love and trust in him and gladly obey what he commands.



Now we have the Ten Commandments, a summary of divine teaching about what we are to do in order that our whole life may be pleasing to God. Everything that is to be a good work must arise and flow from and in this true fountain and channel. So apart from the Ten Commandments no work or thing can be good or pleasing to God, no matter how great or precious it is in the world's eyes. Let us see now what our great saints

can boast of their spiritual orders and their great and mighty works. They have invented and set these things up, while they let these commandments go, as though they were far too insignificant or had long ago been perfectly fulfilled.

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I am of the opinion, indeed, that here one will find his hands full and will have enough to do to keep these commandments: meekness, patience, love towards enemies, chastity, kindness, and other such virtues and their implications [Galatians 5:22-23]. But such works are not of value and make no display in the world's eyes. For these are not peculiar and proud works. They are not restricted to partic-

ular times, places, rites, and customs. They are common, everyday, household works that one neighbor can do for another. Therefore, they are not highly regarded.

Let this be enough about the first part of the common Christian doctrine, both for teaching and urging what is necessary. In conclusion, however, we must repeat the text which belongs here. We have presented this already in the First Commandment, in order that we may learn what pains God requires so that we may learn to teach and do the Ten Commandments:

For I the LORD your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and fourth generation of those who hate Me, but showing steadfast love to thousands of those who love Me and keep My commandments. [Exodus 20:5-6]

As we have heard above, this appendix was primarily attached to the First Commandment. Yet it was laid down for the sake of all the commandments, since all of them are to be referred and directed to it. Therefore, I have said that this also should be presented to and taught to the young. Then they may learn and remember it, and we may see what must move and compel us to keep these Ten Commandments. This part is to be regarded as though it were specially added to each command, so that it dwells in, and runs through, them all.

Now, there is included in these words (as said before) both an angry, threatening word and a friendly promise. These are to terrify and warn us. They are also to lead and encourage us to receive and highly value His Word as a matter of divine sincerity. For God Himself declares how much He is concerned about it and how rigidly He will enforce it: He will horribly and terribly punish all who despise and transgress His commandments. Also, he declares how richly He will reward, bless, and do all good to those who hold them in high value and gladly do and live according to them. So God demands that all our works proceed from a heart that fears and regards God alone. From such fear the heart avoids everything that is contrary to His will, lest it should move Him to wrath. And, on the other hand, the heart also trusts in Him alone and from love for Him does all He wants. For He speaks to us as friendly as a father and offers us all grace and every good.

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Questions for the Week

1. Explain the following phrases:
 - *a jealous God*
 - *punishing the children for the sin of the fathers*
2. According to the following verses, with what does God threaten to punish those who break his commandments?
 - *"There is no peace," says my God, "for the wicked" (Isaiah 57:21).*
 - *"The soul who sins shall die" (Ezekiel 18:4).*
3. Why do we Christians need to remember God's threat to punish sinners? What should God's threat lead us to do?
4. Complete the three parts of the following statement, and discuss the importance of each. Many churches today deny the reality of hell and look upon it as a religious "scarecrow." We, however, teach the doctrine of eternal damnation in hell because...
 - *...many people _____ this truth.*
 - *...it demonstrates what a terrible thing it is to _____ against God.*
 - *...it demonstrates the enormity of God's _____.*

5. What does God promise to those who love him and keep his commandments? What should this lead us to do?

6. What must we all confess about our ability to keep the Ten Commandments? Where alone can we turn for help?

Family Prayer

Lord God, may we always heed your threat to punish the disobedient and to bless those who obey your law. Empower us by the gospel of salvation in Jesus Christ alone to live our lives to your glory. In our Savior's name we ask this. Amen.
