

Shorter Catechism 41-42 “How to Think about the Law in Christ” February 26, 2017
Deuteronomy 6
Matthew 22

"Whoever, then, thinks that he understands the Holy Scriptures, or any part of them,
but puts such an interpretation upon them as does not tend to build up
this twofold love of God and our neighbor,
he does not yet understand them as he ought."
(Augustine, *On Christian Doctrine*, 1.36.40)

Augustine said that 1600 years ago.
It's an interesting way of thinking!
If you interpret scripture in a way that does not result in the love of God and neighbor,
then you have not yet understood scripture correctly!

In other words, if you just set about to understand the historical context of the scriptures,
and you analyze and explain them in terms of what they originally meant –
but you never get to: “how do I love God and neighbor from this passage?”
then you are still not seeing the point.

What does it mean to love God and neighbor?
Last time we saw that the moral law, as Paul saw it in Romans 1-2,
is focused around two things:
everyone knows who God is (and that they are supposed to worship him),
everyone knows what God requires (and that death is the result for disobedience).

In other words, the moral law includes both our relationship with God
and our relationship with others.

Nowadays there's a strong tendency to argue that our relationships with others
can be dealt with entirely apart from the question of our relationship with God.

That's called secularism.

Secularism says that in the public sphere we should set aside the question of
“what it means to love God” –
and deal only with the question of “what it means to love neighbor.”

But as soon as you do that, you are saying that you will not love God with *all* your heart!
If you are going to love the LORD with all your heart,
then you need to love God in all that you do.

Read Matthew 22

1. Jesus and the Great Commandment (Matthew 22)

How should Christians think about the Law?

Jesus tells us:

Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, and mind,
and love your neighbor as yourself.

“On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets.”

Everything else depends on these.

It’s important to note that when Jesus is asked “which is the greatest commandment?”
he does not turn to one of the ten commandments.

He turns to what Moses had called “*the* commandment.”

In Deuteronomy 6, *after* reciting the ten commandments (in chapter 5),

Moses says that “this is *the* commandment, the statutes and the rules...”

In other words, I am about to give you *the* commandment
in which all the ten are summarized.

And what follows is known as the Shema.

Shema is the Hebrew word for “hear”!

“Shema Yisrael, Yehvah Elohenu, Yehvah echad.”

“Hear O Israel, the LORD our God, the LORD is one.

And you shall love the LORD your God

with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.”

This is the greatest commandment.

If you keep this one, you will keep all the others.

If you break this one, then you have broken the whole law.

But Jesus doesn’t stop there.

Because while love for God is indeed the greatest commandment,
there is a second that is like it.

In the same way that man is like God, because he was created in his image;
so also the second commandment is like the first,

because it is in the image of the great commandment.

The Shema indeed is the greatest commandment,

but there is a second command in the law that also summarizes the whole.

Leviticus 19:17-18 declares, “You shall not hate your brother in your heart,

but you shall reason frankly with your neighbor, lest you incur sin because of him.

You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against the sons of your own people,
but you shall love your neighbor as yourself. I am the LORD.”

If you love God, then you must love those who are created in the image of God.

This is precisely what Jesus does in Matthew 22.

There are three questions that his enemies ask Jesus:

Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar?
In the resurrection, whose wife will she be?
Which is the greatest commandment in the Law?

In response to these three questions, Jesus asks one of his own:

“What do you think about the Christ? Whose son is he?”

They reply, quite correctly, “The son of David.”

The messiah—literally, the anointed one—was the heir of the kingdom of God,
as it had been established by David.

But they have not thought about the implications of the scripture,
so Jesus replies,

“How is it then that David, in the Spirit, calls him Lord, saying:

“The Lord said to my Lord,

Sit at my right hand until I put your enemies under your feet?”

If then David calls him Lord, how is he his son?”

This is a quotation from Psalm 110, which we sang earlier.

In Psalm 110 David says that Yahweh speaks to “my Lord,”

and the Pharisees acknowledged that “my Lord” was the Messiah.

Psalm 110 is the promise that one day Yahweh would say to the Son of David,

Sit here at my right hand.

One day, the Son of David would be enthroned at the right hand of God.

But Psalm 110 is a Psalm of David!

David here calls the Messiah, “my Lord.”

Now, do you call your children Lord?

Are your children your masters?

They shouldn't be!

Jesus says that it is inconceivable that David—the great King—

would call his son “Lord” if the Christ is *simply* the Son of David.

What is Jesus doing?

They have asked him, “is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar?”

If your allegiance is to the kingdom of God, can you still pay taxes to Caesar?

They have asked him, “what is the resurrection like?”

If you marry several times in this life, what are your relations in the age to come?

They have asked him, “which is the greatest commandment in the law?”

And Jesus answers with a question:

If David calls the Messiah “Lord” how can the Messiah be merely the Son of David?

This is the key to understanding what Jesus is saying about the Law.

The *kingdom of God* isn't what you think it is.

The *resurrection* isn't what you think it is.

The *law* isn't what you think it is.

Why?

Because the *Messiah* isn't who you think *he* is!

The Jews believed that the Torah—the law—was the ultimate reality.

The Messiah would come and restore the Law of Moses, and the throne of David.

Jesus says that the Christ is the Son of God.

If Jesus is the Son of God,

then you can't put him as a parallel ruler with Caesar.

There's no competition between Jesus and Caesar!

Caesar himself must bow the knee to Jesus.

If Jesus is the Son of God,

then the resurrection is not simply the restoration of the way things were,
but the dawn of a new age,

the beginning of that kingdom to which David's throne pointed.

And if Jesus is the Son of God,

then the whole of the Law and the Prophets must be about him.

The Jews thought that Messiah (the Christ) was for the purpose of restoring Torah (Law).

Jesus says "No, that's backwards.

All the Law and the Prophets are setting the stage for the Christ."

And you can see how our Catechism gets at this by how it relates the moral law,
the ten commandments,

and the Great commandment.

Where is the Moral Law summarily comprehended?

A41. The Moral Law is summarily comprehended in the Ten Commandments.

What is the sum of the Ten Commandments?

A42. The sum of the Ten Commandments is, To love the Lord our God with all our heart, all our soul, with all our strength, and with all our mind; and our neighbor as ourselves.

You cannot say that the moral law *simply equals* the Ten Commandments.

Rather, the moral law is summarily comprehended in the Ten Commandments.

So let's go back to Deuteronomy 6 and see what Jesus is doing with this passage.

2. The Commandment and the Commandments (Deuteronomy 6)

Now this is the commandment, the statutes, and the rules that the LORD your God commanded me to teach you...

The commandment.

Moses has just given the people *Ten* Commandments in chapter 5,

and yet he says, this is THE commandment.
We shouldn't be surprised that Jesus said this was the great commandment –
after all, Moses had said the same thing in Deuteronomy 6!

The commandment (verse 1) can be distinguished from
“all his statutes and commandments” (verse 2).

And what is that commandment?

Love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your might.

This means that our whole heart, soul and strength is to be devoted to God alone.
It means that we are to love him with everything we have;
our love must not be divided between God and others.
Because if we truly love God with everything,
that love will overflow into everything we do.

Look forward to Deuteronomy 11:22.

At the end of this same section that starts here in chapter 6,
Moses is again talking about teaching your children,
and he says,
“For if you will be careful to do all this *commandment* (notice the singular)
that I command you to do, loving the LORD your God,
walking in all his ways,
and holding fast to him...”
then God will drive out your enemies from the land. (Dt 11:22)

Moses describes loving the LORD in two other phrases:
“walking in all his ways” – loving God means *walking* in his ways;
and “holding fast to him” – loving God means *clinging* to him!
This is the same word that is used of marriage in Gen. 2:24,
where Adam says that a husband,
“shall leave his father and mother and HOLD FAST (or cling) to his wife,
and they shall become one flesh.”

This is a powerful image.
Israel's hope – *our* hope – is found in holding fast to God himself.

There is part of me that wants to respond to this:
“Are you nuts?
How can I love God with all my heart?
My thoughts, my desires, and my energies are divided in all sorts of directions!
I can handle the idea that I should worship God only –

but love God with *all* my heart? *all* my soul? *all* my might?
I don't have that kind of energy and focus!
If walking in his ways is necessary – well, my ankle's not going last very long –
and with my arthritic thumb, I'm going to find it hard to do much clinging!"

But at the foundation of the Great Commandment is the Great Redemption!
God has already redeemed his people and set them free!
This is why Paul says in Ephesians 5:

Christ loved the church and
"gave himself for her, that he might sanctify and cleanse her
with the washing of water by the word,
that he might present her to himself a glorious church,
not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing,
but that she should be holy and without blemish."

Christ's love comes with the power to change us,
to transform us into the sort of lover that we ought to be.
Too often, all we want is a God who just loves us and accepts us just the way we are!
But there's a problem with the way we are!
If God simply accepted us the way we are,
he wouldn't be much of a God.

But God's love takes our hateful and spiteful hearts,
and gently, but firmly transforms us.
God doesn't merely accept us the way we are.
God has an agenda--he wants to change you!
And in Jesus Christ—that's exactly what he is doing!

So if God's love for us is a love which seeks to change us,
what should our love for God be like?

What does it mean to love God with all our heart, with all our soul, and with all our strength?
It means to be changed.

If God loves us so that he can change us,
then our love for God should reflect that change.

And in Deuteronomy 6 we see three applications:

- 1) Loving God means remembering what he has done for us, and worshiping him alone
- 2) Loving God means obeying God, trusting in him to accomplish what he has promised
- 3) Loving God means teaching your children all that God has done for us

a. Loving God Means Remembering Him and Worshiping Him (v10-15)

First, loving God means remembering him and worshiping him alone.

This is how Moses says it in verses 10-15:

¹⁰ *“And when the LORD your God brings you into the land that he swore to your fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give you—with great and good cities that you did not build, ¹¹ and houses full of all good things that you did not fill, and cisterns that you did not dig, and vineyards and olive trees that you did not plant—and when you eat and are full, ¹² then take care lest you forget the LORD, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. ¹³ It is the LORD your God you shall fear. Him you shall serve and by his name you shall swear. ¹⁴ You shall not go after other gods, the gods of the peoples who are around you— ¹⁵ for the LORD your God in your midst is a jealous God—lest the anger of the LORD your God be kindled against you, and he destroy you from off the face of the earth.*

Moses says, remember the LORD.

Remember what he has done!

God was present with his people, leading them into the Promised Land.

He is the one who has redeemed you from Egypt--from slavery to sin.

He is the one who loves you as a father loves his children.

The nations have many gods,

but they have no fellowship with their gods.

We have ONE God,

ah, but we may draw near to him because he has drawn near to us.

The Israelites trembled because God revealed himself at a distance at Sinai.

We, on the other hand, have been united with Christ;

and his Holy Spirit dwells in us;

but do we tremble at the thought?

are we amazed at his nearness to us?

We have a gift that Moses could only dream of--

how dare we treat it so lightly!

But notice something else:

not only is God present with us,

but he also gives his people a home.

cities you did not build

houses full of good things you did not fill

wells you did not dig

vineyards and olive trees you did not plant

That is the blessing of the Promised Land:

to receive gifts which are undeserved.

These blessings that God promised to the Israelites in the Promised Land,

are fulfilled for us, first in the comfort of being accepted in the beloved,

accepted in the body of Christ,

and then finally, in the New Creation,
where we will receive a City which God has built,
houses prepared by Christ,
not just wells, but a whole river of Living Water
and we will come to Christ's vineyard,
and share with him the cup of blessing
in the Great Wedding Supper of the Lamb.

But if these blessings are ours in Christ,
then so also the warning of verse 12 is for us:
Those who have drunk deeply of the grace of God,
who have received his rich blessings,
must never forget what God has done for us.
What does this mean?

You may say,
How could we "forget" what God has done?
We all know that Christ died on the cross for our sins.
We all know that he has saved us by his grace.
See, we haven't forgotten.

But forgetting is not an intellectual process.
Forgetting is about worship.
Forgetting is about love.
Have any of you guys ever forgotten your anniversary or an important birthday?
You hadn't really forgotten.
If anyone asked you when your anniversary was, you still know the date!
But for whatever reason,
as that date drew closer, other things crowded that date out of your mind,
and you "forgot".

That's what Moses is talking about.
I won't ever "forget" that Christ died for me,
but I can live as though I've forgotten.
Other things can crowd out Christ,
until I act as though God is distant and irrelevant.

And THAT is idolatry.
As the Israelites get comfy in the Promised Land.
As they get used to their new homes and vineyards,
they will be tempted to worship other gods--to forget the Lord their God.

But God will not tolerate that.

He is a jealous God.

He doesn't like it when you forget how near and how good he is.

b. Loving God Means Doing What He Says (v16-19)

Second, loving God means obeying him – trusting him to do what he has promised – as Moses says in verses 16-19:

¹⁶ “You shall not put the LORD your God to the test, as you tested him at Massah. ¹⁷ You shall diligently keep the commandments of the LORD your God, and his testimonies and his statutes, which he has commanded you. ¹⁸ And you shall do what is right and good in the sight of the LORD, that it may go well with you, and that you may go in and take possession of the good land that the LORD swore to give to your fathers ¹⁹ by thrusting out all your enemies from before you, as the LORD has promised.

God has promised that he will drive all your enemies out of the Land.

He has promised that he will give you the whole of the New Creation.

Believe him!

And live like it.

We obey God because of what he has done,
and because of what he has promised to do.

He has accomplished our salvation in Jesus Christ,
and promises that he will bring it to completion in the day of Christ's return.

What are your enemies?

What are the sins that weigh you down?

What are the things that creep into your thoughts,
distracting you from the remembrance of God,
leading you to forget him?

Is it bitterness toward someone?

Lust?

A particular project which is consuming you?

For instance,

when I am tempted by lust,

I know that God has provided a way out;
since my idolatry is rooted in the fear of rejection,
I look to Christ for his acceptance.

And not just in abstract terms,

I turn to the picture of Christ as a passionate bridegroom:
he has wooed me to himself,
and has given himself to me entirely.

There is no love like his--no embrace so much to be desired as his.

And as I reflect on the powerful love of God in Christ,

my old enemy lust is shattered and destroyed.

If you struggle with sins which involve your imagination,
you must find holy pictures
which can replace the unholy ones you have stored in your memory.

After Paul talks about the rebellion and grumblings in the wilderness in I Cor. 10,
he says,

"Now all these things happened to them as examples,
and they were written for our admonition,
upon whom the ends of the ages have come.
Therefore, let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall.
No temptation has seized you except such as is common to man;
but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted
beyond what you are able,
but with the temptation will also make the way of escape,
that you may be able to bear it."

You must believe that God will provide,
and seek for that provision.

And there is no substitute for what Moses advises,

"You shall diligently keep the commandments of the Lord your God,
his testimonies and his statutes which he has commanded you.
And you shall do what is right and good in the sight of the Lord,
that it may be well with you,
and that you may go in and possess the good land
of which the Lord swore to your fathers,
to cast out all your enemies from before you,
as the Lord has spoken."

God has promised that he will destroy your enemies and bring you safely into the Land,

Therefore,

believe his promises and obey his commands.

You know,

if we spent all our time doing what God has given us to do,
we wouldn't have any time left to get into trouble!

c. Loving God Means Teaching Your Children to Do the Same (v20-25)

And finally, loving God means teaching your children to do the same!

²⁰ "When your son asks you in time to come, 'What is the meaning of the testimonies and the statutes and the rules that the LORD our God has commanded you?' ²¹ then you shall say to your son, 'We were Pharaoh's slaves in Egypt. And the LORD brought us out of Egypt with a mighty

hand. ²² And the LORD showed signs and wonders, great and grievous, against Egypt and against Pharaoh and all his household, before our eyes. ²³ And he brought us out from there, that he might bring us in and give us the land that he swore to give to our fathers. ²⁴ And the LORD commanded us to do all these statutes, to fear the LORD our God, for our good always, that he might preserve us alive, as we are this day. ²⁵ And it will be righteousness for us, if we are careful to do all this commandment before the LORD our God, as he has commanded us.'

The fifth commandment says to honor your father and your mother.

This is fairly unique in ancient cultures:
most ignore mothers.

And so here in chapter 6,

I would suggest that the command to teach your children
applies both to fathers and mothers.

So, when you are teaching the book of Deuteronomy to your children (that is the idea of v20),
and they ask you, "so what?"

You are to answer by teaching them of our great redemption.

When you sit down in your house--you are to speak of God's commandments;
When you drive down the street, you are to remind them of his blessings;
As you go to bed teach them of his great redemption.
When you get up in the morning, talk about the new life that Christ has given.

Family worship is a good place to start,

and I hope that all of you are spending some time as a family in the Word and prayer,
but that's only the beginning.

This is to become a part of everyday life.

Do you talk with your kids about what goes on at school?

Yeah, because that's an everyday part of life.

Do you play with your kids, and go to their school events?

Yeah, because that's an everyday part of life.

Do you talk with your kids about Christ?

No?

Do you realize what happens if you *don't*?

You are telling them that Christ has nothing to do with everyday life.

You are teaching them that God gets one day a week,
and other gods have the other six.

If you climb into bed and realize that you have not spoken with your wife,
or your children,

about the great and wonderful gift that is ours in Christ,

then repent.
If you have not spoken of the mighty deeds of God with them,
if you have not prayed with them,
then you have failed to do the most important thing in the world that day.

Or, to put it another way,
you have not loved *God* that day!

(You know, I'll tell you something – your pastor really gets on my nerves!
I hate it when he says stuff like this, because I'm not doing a very good job of this!)

And children, think about this too:
You should be like the son in verse 20,
you should ask your parents, "what is the meaning of what God has done?"

After all, if you love God, then you will speak of these things every day!
If you do not teach your children, then **YOU DO NOT LOVE GOD.**

Does this one sting a little?
I cannot apologize for saying it so strongly,
but I can offer you hope!
If your children belonged to you,
then you would have to despair,
But your children don't belong to you.

In Jesus Christ,
God has adopted them, with us, as his children.
We are like orphans whom God has taken into his home;
and though we fail to imitate his fatherly care and protection,
he **NEVER** fails to guide and direct us and our children in his ways.
That is why God made his covenant with us and with our children!
He promises that even though we will fail to teach our children as we should,
he **NEVER** fails in fulfilling his promises.

So rather than cause us to despair,
we ought to recognize his gracious kindness to us,
and that ought to stimulate us all the more to love and good deeds.

After all, remember Jesus' point?
The kingdom of God isn't what you think it is.
The resurrection isn't what you think it is.
The law of God isn't what you think it is.

Why does David call the Christ "my Lord"?

Because the Word became flesh and dwelt among us.
The eternal Son of God himself became a man.

Think back to Dt 6:6-9

And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. ⁷ You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. ⁸ You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. ⁹ You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

What does it mean to have the Law of God written on your doorposts?

If Jesus Christ is the new temple,
and we are living stones being built together into a spiritual house,
then what does it mean to have the Law of God written on your doorposts?

It means that it is written on our hearts – on our lives.

It means that we love God and neighbor –
and it means that others can see us doing it.

The public display of the Law of God that Christ calls us to
is the public display of our love toward him, toward one another,
and toward everyone.

Our hope is not in our ability to keep the law.

Our hope is in the Christ who kept the law.

Why does David call him Lord?

Because David knew that he needed a Savior and Lord—just like us.

Let us pray:

Father, forgive us for not loving you with our whole heart, and soul and strength. Forgive us for forgetting you and turning to other gods. Forgive us for disobeying you and not trusting that you will defeat our enemies. And forgive us for not speaking of these things to our children. Our love for you is often so cold that we treat you as an unwelcome visitor in our homes. Your Word too often lies forsaken on our tables; Your Name comes too seldom to our lips. We think fond and tender thoughts of our idols, and leave you in a remote corner of our minds, only to call for you on Sunday morning. Forgive us Father. Have mercy upon us, for the sake of your Son Jesus Christ, forgive all that is past, and grant to us your Holy Spirit that he may inspire our hearts with new love and devotion to you. May we truly worship and glorify your Holy Name, O Father, Son and Holy Spirit--One God whom we love and adore, both now and forever. Amen.