

A Compendium of the Ten Commands.

by John Gill

The Ten Commandments are a summary of the moral law, requiring love to God and love to the neighbour.

Scripture: Matthew 22:36

Topics: "Love", "Obedience to God's Law"

Description

John Gill emphasizes that the essence of the Ten Commandments is encapsulated in the two greatest commandments: to love God and to love our neighbor. He explains that each commandment not only prohibits certain actions but also commands the opposite virtues, highlighting the spiritual nature of the law that extends beyond mere actions to include thoughts and intentions. Gill argues that the Decalogue serves as a moral guide for all people, binding both Jews and Gentiles, and underscores the importance of obedience to God's commands as a reflection of our covenant relationship with Him. He concludes by affirming that while the law is extensive and cannot be perfectly fulfilled by man, righteousness is found through faith in Christ, who fulfills the law on our behalf.

Transcript

A Body of PRACTICAL Divinity

Book 4--Chapter 6

A COMPENDIUM OR SUMMARY OF THE DECALOGUE OR TEN COMMANDS

The Commandments of the law are reduced by Christ to two capital ones; Love to God, and Love to the neighbour, (Matthew 22:36-40) and the apostle Paul says; "All the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this, Thou shall love thy neighbour as thyself", (Gal. 5:14) he means the commandments of the second table of the law; and, indeed, love, as it includes both branches of it, love to God and to men, briefly comprehends every other command; and therefore with propriety it is said by him, "Love is the fulfilling of the law", (Rom. 13:9, 10) and what may serve to epitomize the Decalogue, and to sum up the contents of each command, is a rule or two that may be observed; as, that the prohibition of any sin includes in it a command of the contrary virtue or duty; and so "vice versa"; and that the prohibition of any sin, and the command of any duty, include in them all sins and duties of the same kind or kindred, with all causes, means, and occasions thereof, as may be exemplified in our Lord's exposition of the "sixth" and "seventh" commands, (Matthew 5:21, 22, 27, 28) by which it appears, that the law is spiritual, and reaches not only to external actions, done in the body, but to inward thoughts, affections, and lusts of the mind.

The preface to the Decalogue contains arguments or motives unto obedience to the commandments in it. As, 1a. That it is "the Lord" Jehovah, the author of our beings, the God of our lives and mercies, the sovereign Lord and Governor of the world, who enjoins it; who has a right to command his creatures what he pleases, and it becomes them to obey him. 2b. He that enjoins these precepts is the Lord thy God; not only thy Creator, thy Preserver, and Benefactor, but thy covenant God; as he was peculiarly to the Jews in a national sense, which laid them under great obligation to him; and if he is our God in a special sense, according to the tenor of the covenant of grace, the obligation is till the greater. 3c.

He is farther described, as he "which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage", which was only literally true of the people of Israel; which shows that the Decalogue, as to the form of it, and as delivered through the hands and ministry of Moses, only concerned that people, and was calculated for their use; though, as to the matter of it, and so far as it is of a moral nature, and agrees with the law and light of nature, it is equally binding on Gentiles; and if the redemption mentioned is considered as typical of spiritual and eternal redemption by Christ, from the bondage of sin, Satan, and the law, the obligation to serve the Lord, and obey him, is still more strong and forcible (see Tit 2:14; 1 Cor. 6:20).

The Decalogue itself follows. 1. The "first" command is, "Thou shalt have no other gods" before me. The things required in this precept are, 1a. That we should know, own, and acknowledge God, the one, only, true God, and none else, (Mark 12:29; Ps. 46:10; Hosea 13:4). 1b. That we should worship him, and him only; not any creature with him; nor any more than he; nor, indeed, any besides him (Matthew 4:10; Rom. 1:25). 1c. That we should exercise faith and trust in him, hope in him, and love him, (John 14:1; Jer. 17:5; Matthew 22:39).

The things forbidden by it are, 1d. Atheism; denying there is a God, or any of the perfections essential to Deity, as his omniscience, omnipotence, &c. and his providence in, and government of the world (Ps. 14:1; Ezek. 9:9). 1e. Polytheism, or the worshipping of many gods, or more than one; as the sun, moon, and stars, the host of heaven, and a multitude of things on earth; either by Jews or Gentiles (Deut. 4:19; Jer. 2:28; 1 Cor. 8:5, 6). 1f. Whatever is trusted in, and loved as God, as wealth and riches, which to do is idolatry, (Job 31:24; Ps. 49:6; Eph. 5:5) or fleshly lusts, as the epicure, whose god is his belly, (Phil. 3:19) or any other lust or idol set up in a man's heart, as self-righteousness, or be it what it may (Ezek. 14:4, 36:25).

The phrase "before me", is not to be overlooked; which may either point at the omniscience of God, in whose sight such idolatry must be very displeasing; or the placing of any object of worship by him, which is setting up man's post by his, as Manasseh placed a graven image in the temple itself, (2 King 21:7) or it may be rendered, "Besides me", and so excludes all other objects of worship, there being no God but him (Isa. 44:8, 45:21). I would just propose it, whether the words *ynp le* may not be rendered, "Besides my persons", besides the Three persons in the Trinity, who are the one God; *le* frequently signifies "besides", (Gen. 31:50; Lev. 18:18; Deut. 19:9) and *ynp* may be interpreted, "my faces", or "persons"; see the Body of Doctrinal Divinity; Book 1, Chapter 27. 2.

The "second" command is, "Thou shalt not make to thyself any graven image, or any likeness--thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them", &c. which respects the mode of worship. And, 2a. Requires, that it should be spiritual, suitable to the nature of God, without any carnal imaginations, and external representations of him, (John 4:23, 24; Phil. 3:3) and that the parts of divine worship; as prayer, praise, preaching, hearing the word, and administration of ordinances; be observed just as delivered, without any addition to them, corruption and alteration of them (Deut. 4:2; 1 Cor. 11:2). 2b.

It forbids all superstition and will worship, human traditions, precepts, and ordinances of men; and the introduction of any thing into the worship of God, which he has not commanded, (Isa. 29:13; Matthew 15:8; Col. 2:20-23) and all images, figures, and representations of the divine Being, and of any of the persons in the Godhead; and, indeed, making the likeness of any creature, in heaven, earth, or sea, in order to be worshipped, and used for that purpose, (Deut. 4:15-18; Acts 17:29; Rom. 1:23) and not only images of heathen deities, which were to be broken and burnt, but those of Christ, as a man crucified, of the Virgin Mary, of angels and saints departed, worshipped by Papists (Deut. 7:5; Rev. 19:20).

Though all pictures, paintings, and sculptures, are not forbidden hereby, only such as are made for, and used in, divine worship; but not which are for ornament, or for the use of history; and to perpetuate to posterity the memory of men, and their actions; otherwise there were images of things, of lions, and oxen, and the cherubim, in the tabernacle and temple, by the express order of God (Ex. 25:18; 1 King 6:32, 7:29). 2c. The motives inducing to obey this command, are taken from God's being a jealous God, who will not give his glory to another, nor his praise to graven images; and from his severe punishment of the breakers of it, and of their posterity, who tread in their steps; and from his mercy shown to those who, from a principle of love to him, observe it (Isa. 42:8; Deut. 32:21, 4:23, 24; 1 King 19:18). 3.

The "third" command is, "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain". Which, 3a. Requires an holy and reverend use of the name of God; of his titles, perfections, attributes, word, and works, even in common conversation, and especially in religious worship; expressed by walking in his name, invocation of his name, and giving thanks unto it (Ps. 111:9 89:7; Mic. 4:5; Rom. 10:12; Ps. 103:1). 3b. It forbids a vain use of the name of God, and of any of his titles, in common conversation, using them in a light way and manner; all profane swearing and cursing by them, (Rom. 3:13; James 3:9, 10) perjury, or swearing falsely by his name; for though an oath may be taken lawfully, and always by the name of God, and not a creature; yet never to be taken falsely (Deut. 6:13; Heb. 6:16; Zech. 8:17).

So likewise blaspheming the name of God is a breach of this precept, (Lev. 24:14; Ps. 74:10). 3c. The argument moving to the observation of it, is taken from the guilt incurred by it, and the punishment inflicted for it; "The Lord will not hold such guiltless" (Zech. 5:4; Mal. 3:5). 4. The "fourth" command respects the time of worship; the keeping a day holy to the Lord; and requires that it should be after six days labour, (Ex. 20:9) that it should be observed in religious exercises, (Isa. 58:13; Rom. 14:6) and as a rest from bodily labour, from all secular business and worldly employment, excepting works of necessity and mercy; the example urging to it is taken from God's resting from his works of creation (Ex. 35:2, 3; Neh. 10:31; Gen. 2:1, 2).

But this has been treated of in a preceding chapter. 5. The "fifth" command requires honour, reverence, and obedience to be given by inferiors to superiors; as by children to parents, so by scholars to tutors and preceptors, by servants to masters, and by subjects to magistrates; and forbids all disrespect, contempt, irreverence, and disobedience of them; which also has been treated of in some former chapters. 6. The "sixth" command is, "Thou shalt not kill". Which, 6a. Requires all due care in the use of proper means for the preservation of our lives, and the lives of others; life is and ought to be dear to a man; self-preservation is a first principle in nature; and every lawful method should be used to preserve life; as food, physic, sleep, &c. with all just and lawful defence of it; avoiding everything that tends to impair health and endanger life (Job 2:4; 1 Tim. 5:23). 6b.

It forbids the taking away of life, or murder of every sort; as parricide, fratricide, homicide, and suicide; for this law is "against murderers of fathers, and murderers of mothers, and manslayers", and destroyers of

themselves, (1 Tim. 1:1) no man has a right to take away his own life, nor the life of another; it is contrary to the authority of God, the sovereign disposer of life, (Deut. 32:39) to the law of nature, (Acts 16:28) to the goodness of God, who gives it, (Job 10:12; Acts 17:28) contrary to the love a man owes to himself, and his neighbour, and is a prejudice to the commonwealth, or public good, thereby deprived of a member, and the king of a subject.

Not but that life may be taken away; as in lawful war, which is sometimes of God, who "makes peace and creates evil", the evil of war; and by the hands of the civil magistrate, who bears the sword of justice, and uses it for the punishment of capital crimes; and it is lawful in self-defence (1 Chron. 5:22; Isa. 45:7; Gen. 9:6; Rom. 13:4; Ex. 22:2). 6c. All intemperance, immoderate eating and drinking, which tend to destroy life; all sinful anger, undue wrath, inordinate passions, quarrels, blows, contentions, dwellings, &c. which often issue in it, are breaches of this law (Prov. 23:1, 2; Matthew 5:21, 22). 7.

The "seventh" command is, "Thou shalt not commit adultery". Which, 7a. Requires chastity, and a preservation of it in ourselves and others; in or out of a state of wedlock; and to abstain from all impurity of flesh and spirit; and to make use of all means to preserve it; as lawful marriage, conjugal love, and cohabitation: it requires to keep the body, and the members of it, in subjection; to mortify inordinate affection; and to avoid every thing that tends to unchastity; as intemperance, in the case of Lot; sloth and idleness, as in Sodom; immodest apparel and ornament, as in Jezebel; keeping ill company, and frequenting places of diversion, which are nurseries of vice; and also reading impure books. 7b.

It forbids all the species of uncleanness; not only adultery, but simple fornication, rape, incest, and all unnatural lusts (1 Cor. 6:18; 1 Thess. 4:3; Lev. 18:6, 20). 7c. All unchaste thoughts and desires, all adulterous looks, obscene words, and filthy actions, rioting and drunkenness, chambering and wantonness, are violations of this command (Matthew 5:27, 28; 2 Peter 2:14; Eph. 5:4; Rom. 13:14). 8. The "eighth" command is, "Thou shalt not steal". Which, 8a. Requires that we should seek to get, preserve, and increase our own wealth, and that of others, in a lawful way; that we should be diligent in our callings, careful to provide for our families; and even things convenient, honest, and reputable in the sight of all; and that we may have somewhat to give to those in need; and that of our own, and not be tempted to steal from others; for God hates robbery for burnt offering (Prov. 22:29; 1 Tim. 5:8; Rom. 12:17; Eph. 4:28; Isa. 61:8). 8b.

It requires justice, truth, and faithfulness in all dealings with men to owe no man anything, but to give to all their dues; to have and use just weights and measures; to be true to all engagements, promises, and contracts; and to be faithful in whatsoever is committed to our care and trust (Rom. 13:7, 8; Lev. 19:35, 36, 6:2-5; Neh. 5:12). 8c. It forbids all unjust ways of increasing our own, and hurting our neighbour's substance, by using false balances, weights, and measures; by over reaching and circumventing in trade and commerce; by taking away by force or fraud the goods, properties, and persons of men; by borrowing and not paying again; and by oppression, extortion, and unlawful usury; for not all usury is unlawful, only what is exorbitant, and oppressive of the poor; for it is but reasonable, that what one man gains by another man's money, that the other man should have a proportionate share in that gain.

Nor was the Israelites borrowing of the Egyptians, without payment, any breach of this law, since it was by the order of God, whose all things are; and the words used may be rendered, the one asked[1] and the other gave[2]; and besides, it was but repaying them what was due to them for their past services (Amos 8:5, 6; 1 Thess. 4:6; Ps. 37:21; 1 Cor. 6:9, 10; Deut. 23:1, 20; Ex. 11:2, 12:35). 9. The "ninth" command is, "Thou, shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour".

Which, 9a. Requires to be careful of our own good name, and that of our neighbour, which is better than precious ointment and that we should speak every man truth to his neighbour, in private conversation, and especially in public judgment (Eccl. 7:1; Zech. 8:16; Eph. 4:25). 9b. It forbids all lying, which is speaking contrary to a man's mind and conscience, and with a design to deceive; and so condemns all sorts of lies, whether jocose, officious, or more plainly pernicious, and all equivocations, and mental reservations, perjury, and every false oath, bearing a false witness, and subornation of false witnesses in a court of judicature, (Matthew 26:59, 60; Acts 6:11,12) against all which God will be a swift witness, (Mal. 3:5) it also forbids all slandering, tale bearing, raising, receiving, spreading and encouraging an ill report of others, which is contrary to charity (Ps. 50:19, 20; Lev. 19:16; Jer. 20:10; 1 Cor. 13:7). 10.

The "tenth" command is, "Thou shalt not covet", &c. Which requires, 10a. Contentment^[3] in every state and condition of life; a lesson the apostle Paul had learnt, and every man should, (Phil. 4:11; Heb. 13:5; 1 Tim. 6:6, 8) as also love, joy, pleasure, and delight in the happiness of others (Ps. 35:27). 10b. It forbids all uneasiness and discontent in our present circumstances, and all fretting and envying at the prosperity of others, (Ps. 37:7, 73:3) and condemns covetousness as an evil thing, and which is idolatry, and unbecoming saints (Isa. 57:17; Col. 3:8; Eph. 5:3). 10c.

It mentions the particular objects not to be coveted; not a "neighbour's house", and take it away by force, as some did, (Mic. 2:2) nor a "neighbour's wife", as David coveted Bathsheba, (2 Sam. 11:3) "nor his man servant, nor his maid servant", which a king would do, take at his will, and put to his work, as Samuel suggested, (1 Sam. 8:16) "nor his ox nor his ass", from which evil Samuel exculpated himself, and which was admitted, (1 Sam. 12:3) "nor anything that is thy neighbour's", his gold, silver, apparel, or any goods of his; of which sin the apostle Paul declares himself free (Acts 20:33). 10d.

It strikes at the root of all sin, evil concupiscence, internal lust, indwelling sin (James 1:13, 14). By this law lust is known to be sin, and is condemned by it as such (Rom. 7:7). From this view of the law, in all its precepts, it appears how large and extensive it is; that David might well say, "Thy commandment is exceeding broad!" (Ps. 119:96). So that it cannot be perfectly fulfilled by man in this his sinful and fallen state; and therefore he cannot be justified before God by the deeds of it; since it requires a perfect righteousness: and happy for man it is, that there is such a righteousness revealed in the gospel, manifested without the law, though witnessed to by law and prophets, even the righteousness of Christ, consisting of his active and passive obedience; who is the end, the fulfilling end, of the law for righteousness, to everyone that believes (Rom. 3:20-22, 10:4). ENDNOTES:

[1] wlaw "Postulaverunt", Vatablus; "Petierunt", Drusius.

[2] Mwlavyw "et dederunt illis", Cartwright.

[3] Of this see Book 1, Chap. 12.

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