

LOVE TO GOD AND OUR NEIGHBOUR, THE SUM OF THE TEN COMMANDMENTS.

MATTH. xxii. 37, 38, 39.—*Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.*

MARK xii. 30.—*Thou shalt love the Lord thy God,—with all thy strength.*

THIS is an answer made by our Lord to a captious question put to him by a learned scribe. If Christ had pitched on any particular command of the ten, the lawyer, for so the querist is called, would certainly have excepted in some other, and accused him of villifying some other commands; but Christ gives the summary of both tables of the law, yea, of the whole scriptures touching a holy life: *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, &c.* In which words may be noticed,

1. The sum of the first table of the law that is, *love to the Lord*, and that such love is superior and transcendent; such love as gives the whole man to the Lord, with all the strength of all the powers of soul and body.

2. The sum of the second table; that is, *love to our neighbour*, and that such love as we bear to ourselves, (but not as to God,) sincere and constant.

3. Christ compares the two together, shewing that love to God is the command first to be looked unto, and by which the other is regulated, whether as to loving ourselves or our neighbour. *The second is like unto it*, as having the same authority, and must be joined with the first, and is the fountain of acceptable obedience to the second-table commands, as the first is the true spring of acceptable obedience to the first table duties.

4. He shews the whole law and the doctrine of the prophets, touching holiness, to depend on these as the sum of all.

The doctrine arising from the words is,

DOCT. 'The sum of the ten commandments is, to love the Lord our God with all our heart, with all our soul, with all our strength, and with all our mind; and our neighbour as ourselves.'

The sum of all the commands (ye see) is love. So the ten commandments are the law of love; they are a law that is chiefly conversant about the heart, which is the seat of love. The scope of

them is to unite men to God and to one another; for there is no such cement of hearts as holiness.

The text and doctrine consists of two parts.

I. The sum of the first table of the law is love to God.

II. The sum of the second is love to our neighbour.

I. The sum of the first table of the law is love to God.

Here I shall shew,

1. The ingredients of this love to God, whereof it is made up.

2. The properties of it.

3. Why this love is due to God.

4. How love to the Lord stands in relation to other commands.

5. *Lastly*, Apply.

First, I shall shew the ingredients of this love to God, whereof it is made up.

1. Knowledge of him. An unseen but not an unknown God can be loved with all the heart, soul, strength, and mind. Ignorant souls cannot love God; what the eye sees not, the heart likes not. Hell fire may have heat without light: but all heavenly fire has light as well as heat. Thou must know God. (1.) Who he is, to wit, the Lord Jehovah, the one God in three persons, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. These are the object of divine love. (2.) What he is in his attributes, as an infinite, eternal and unchangeable Being. Comprehend him ye cannot, but apprehend him ye must, as he has revealed himself. And so when love is shed abroad in the heart, the veil is first taken from the eyes.

2. Chusing him for our God, our chief good and portion, Psal. lxxiii. 25. 'Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee.' *Thou shalt love the Lord with all thy heart.* If we love him not above all, we do not truly love him; if we chuse him not for our portion, we love him not above all. The soul that loves the Lord, sees that in him which may satisfy it, nothing out of him that is necessary to make the soul happy. Hence it does, by choice, take up its everlasting rest in him, and finds a match to itself in him.

3. Cleaving to him as our God: *Love the Lord thy God.* Love is a uniting thing; it makes the soul cleave to the object. Thou must cleave to the Lord, to his ways, word, &c. Not to be separated from him by whatsoever wedge the devil or the world may drive. Not to be bribed from him, nor boasted either, Cant. viii. 7. 'Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it.' And cleave to him as thy God; for so he will be loved. He must be thy God, before thou canst love him aright. Thus was it with Adam, and Christ; and thus it is with believers.

Hence it is evident, (1.) That faith is the first spring of all true obedience. There is no obedience but from love, no love but from faith, whereby God becomes our God.—How can it otherwise be? for although God is in himself the chief good, if he be not ours, the more perfect Being he is, the more terrible an enemy he is.

(2.) The way prescribed by God himself for us to attain love to him, is to apprehend him by faith to be our God; which now can be no otherwise but by faith in Christ. So that to love God, that he may love us, is a preposterous method. But let us labour to embrace Christ, and so to believe God loves us in him; then shall the heart natively flow out in love to him, 1 John iv. 19; ‘We love him, because he first loved us.’

4. High thoughts and a transcendent esteem of him, Cant. v. 10. ‘My beloved is white and ruddy, the chiefest among ten thousand.’ He is the best of beings, the most amiable and lovely, that shines with unparalleled perfections; and therefore is to have the supreme place in our estimation as well as affections. Here our esteem cannot go too high, more than we can reach beyond what is infinite. We cannot launch out too far in admiration of his glory. Thus should we highly and honourably think of him as the best and greatest. It is a sad character of the wicked man, Psal. x. 4. that ‘God is not in all his thoughts.’

5. Desire towards him, Psal. lxxiii. 25. Whatever other desires we have, the main stream of our desires must run towards the Lord, Psal. xxvii. 4. to the enjoyment of him in this life, and the perfect enjoyment of him hereafter; so that God not being perfectly enjoyed here, it is natural to the lovers of God to desire to ‘be with Christ,’ Phil. i. 23; 2 Thess. iii. 5.

6. *Lastly*, Complacency in him, Cant. i. 13. The soul must delight in him, have a pleasure in him. The lover of the Lord is well pleased there is such a being, well pleased with all his attributes, all his relations to us, all his words, ways, and works. And the want of this makes men haters of God in the scripture-sense.

Secondly, I shall shew the properties of this love required of us. It is,

1. Sincere, not in word and tongue only, shewing much love, Prov. xxiii. 26, but inwardly, our hearts being with him, to him, and for him.

2. Most strong and vigorous, even as much as we are capable of, all the strength we are masters of. Love may be sincere, though not most intense, and that the gospel may accept: but the law requires a perfection of degrees as well as of parts. The greatest fervour of affection is due to God, and the greatest ardency of love, beyond which we cannot go.

3. Pure and absolute for himself. Not that we are not to love God as our benefactor, Psal. cxvi. 11. but we must love him also and mainly for those excellencies that are in him, Cant. i. 3. for his truth, justice, mercy, holiness, &c.

4. A superlative and transcendent love. We must love God above all creatures whatsoever, ourselves or others, Luke xiv. 26. And so must all other loves be swallowed up in his; we must love nothing beside him, but for him, and in due subordination to him.

5. An intelligent love, Mark xii. 33. We must love him as those that see good cause to love him. There is no blindness in this love; for there are no faults in the object to be hid; but the better we see, the more we love.

6. *Lastly*, An efficacious working love, 1 John iii. 18. Therefore says the apostle, Rom. xiii. 10. 'Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore 'love is the fulfilling of the law.' Love devotes the whole man to God, to serve his glory in the world, Rom. xiv. 7, 8. and makes him ready to forego what is dearest to him in the world for God, Acts xx. 24. and sets a man on doing and suffering at his call.

Thirdly, I will shew why this love is due to God. It is due because of his transcendent excellency, and absolute loveliness. There is nothing in him but what is good; all goodness is in him, and nothing wanting; and each part of goodness is in him infinitely. No love, then, is suitable to him but such a love. There is nothing lovely in the creatures, but what is eminently in him, Matth. xix. 17; but there is something wanting in all the creatures, that must stint our love.

Fourthly, I shall shew how love to the Lord stands in relation to other commands.

1. It is the chief duty. It is what God mainly requires, and what we ought mainly to aim at. It is the end, to which even faith itself is but the mean, and in that respect is by the apostle preferred to all others, 1 Cor. xiii.

2. It is the comprehensive duty of all, Rom. xiii. 10. As is our love, so will our obedience be. Were our love perfect, our obedience would be so too. It is the fruitful womb out of which proceed all other duties.

3. It is an universal duty; it goes through all. Whatever acceptable service we do, must be done in love; and if it be not done so, it is not accepted. Other duties are the meat, but this is the salt to season all.

Fifthly, I shall deduce some inferences from what has been said.

Inf. 1. What a sweet law is the law of God, that law of love! how

rational! how drawing! Did ever prince make a law for his subjects to love him? But God has made such a law: and all his loyal subjects cheerfully obey it, and find their advantage in it.

2. See the excellency of the love of God. The whole law is comprised in love. Would ye have the most short way to obedience? then love the Lord. Take a hold of this master-link, and ye will draw the whole chain after you. He that loveth God, will keep his commandments; for love is the fulfilling of the law.

3. How little obedience or true holiness is there in the world? for how little love to God is there? Alas for the cold hearts that make benumbed hands and feet! Did men love God as he deserves and requires to be loved, could they break his commandments, and live in such carelessness and unconcern about God and his laws, and the important concerns of their souls, as the generality do? Alas! the coldness of professors in the cause of God, is a melancholy evidence that love to him is at a low ebb amongst us.

4. What an absurd thing is the device of supererogating, and doing more than the law requires? We are required to love God with all our heart, soul, strength, and mind? Is it possible to go further than that? Nay, can any man attain to such a perfect love? No person that truly loves God can possibly think he exceeds the pitch of loving him required in the law. On the contrary, it is matter of grief to him that he cannot love him enough. Any measure he has attained proves unsatisfying. He will still desire and labour to have his love more increased, and rendered more lively and intense. So far will he be from imagining he loves God more than it is his duty to do.

5. There is no true religion where there is no heart-religion: and there is no respect to the law, where there is no love. It is in vain for men to pretend to be religious, while they have no principle of love to God implanted and operating in their hearts. External obedience is of no avail without internal, founded upon and proceeding from love to God as its source. All true obedience is the fruit of love to God; and where love prevails in the heart, there will be a sincere respect to God's commandments, to his word, his ordinances, and institutions.

6. Let us all be induced to love God with all our heart, with all our soul, with all our strength, and with all our mind: esteeming and preferring him above all other things, acquisitions, possessions, and enjoyments; giving him the chief room in our hearts, delighting and resting in him as our chief good and upmaking portion; desiring to be more and more acquainted with him, and ardently longing to have copious manifestations of his love and grace made to our-

selves; and in a sincere respect to all his laws, statutes, and precepts. And let us be ready to part with all we have, all our enjoyments and possessions, however valuable and dear they may be to us; at the Lord's call and command, whenever we can keep them no longer in a consistency with our love to God and his cause. We must forsake all to follow Christ; and lay down our life, rather than not love the Lord our God.

I now proceed to consider the second part of the text and doctrine, viz.

II. The sum of the second table of the law is love to our neighbour.

In discoursing from this point, I shall shew,

1. Who is our neighbour.
2. What is that love we owe to our neighbour.
3. How we are to love our neighbour.
4. *Lastly*, Apply the point.

First, I am to shew who is our neighbour. Every man is our neighbour, known or unknown, friend or foe, good or bad, Luke x. 29, 37. This neighbourhood is founded on two things especially.

1. That common relation that is among all as branches of one stock, having one common nature, Acts xvii. 26. 2. The common capacity of all to enjoy the same God, and to meet in him; all men being capable of that happiness, because of their immortal souls capable of enjoying an infinite good. Hence see,

1. How the hatred of evil men and love to them may be reconciled, Psalm cxxxix. 21. 'Do not I hate them, O Lord, that hate thee? and am not I grieved with those that rise up against thee? Compare the text, *Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself*. We have the common grounds aforementioned whereon to love all men; but inasmuch as sin is a depravation of that common nature, and the only thing that mars men's enjoyments of God, we hate their sins, though we love their persons; as we hate the moth, because we love the garment. Hatred to men's persons, whoever or whatever they be, is inconsistent with this command that enjoins the love of our neighbour as well as the love of God. But to hate and abhor their sins and evil deeds, is quite consistent with love to their persons. And agreeably to this, David's hatred to those who hated God, ultimately terminated on their sins, and not their persons.

2. We see here a ground whereon we ought to love our enemies. Their common nature with us, and their common capacity of happiness with us in the enjoyment of God, remains, though they do evil to us; and therefore we are bid pray for them, Matth. v. 44. 'Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate

you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you*.

Secondly, I shall shew what is that love we owe to our neighbour. In it there is,

1. A due esteem of him, 1 Pet. ii. 17. 'Love the brotherhood.' There are no persons but who have something for which they are to be esteemed. Some have grace, all have gifts, natural or moral, in greater or less measure, which are from God, James i. 17. None want precious souls, that are of more worth and value than the world. And the pearl must be esteemed precious, though in a dunghill.

2. Benevolence or good-will to them, Luke vi. 31. 'As ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise.' We are heartily to desire their welfare for time and eternity, to wish them the best things. This good affection we are to bear to all. And this brings in with it a sorrow for the evil that befalls them, and joy in their good and prosperity.

3. Beneficence, doing them what good we can, doing to them as we would be done to, Matth. vii. 12. Gal. iv. 10. We are not born for ourselves, but for God and our neighbour; and therefore we should lay out ourselves to be useful in the world and to advance the good of mankind, so far as we are capable.

4. Complacency, or delight in them, so far as any good thing appears in them, 1 Pet. ii. 17. 'Honour all men.' This doth in a special manner belong to the saints, those excellent ones, in whom should be all our delight, Psal. xvi. 3. Yet a delight in the good gifts of God in any man, and their amiable qualities and dispositions, is our duty.

Thirdly, I shall shew, how we are to love our neighbour: *As yourselves*, says the text. Here two things are to be noticed.

1. That there is an allowable self-love, a love that we may and ought to bear to ourselves; for that is the rule of love to our neighbour. We are to love our own bodies, by all lawful means to see to their welfare. For, says the apostle, Eph. v. 29. 'No man ever yet hated his own flesh: but nourisheth and cherisheth it.' And we are to love our own souls, by all means to endeavour their salvation, and to beware of all that may obstruct it. For, says wisdom, Prov. viii. 36. 'He that sinneth against me, wrongeth his own soul.' We are to love ourselves in God, and for God; for he and not

* This subject of loving our enemies may be seen well handled in a collection of this author's sermons, formerly published, entitled, *The distinguishing characters of true believers*, p. 248, 274.

man's self, is his chief end. This becomes sinful self-love, when it does not remain in due subordination to the love of God, or destroys love to our neighbour.

2. In what sense we are to love our neighbour as ourselves? This hath a respect both to the matter and to the manner. As to the matter, this likeness lies chiefly in three things.

(1.) That we neither wish evil, nor do evil to our neighbour, more than to ourselves. (2.) That we wish all good to our neighbour as to ourselves, and be ready to do all we can to procure and further it. (3.) That we desire these things to our neighbour, out of a true respect to him, and his advantage, not our own.

As to the manner, (1.) We must love our neighbour as truly and really as we love ourselves. No man feigns a love to himself: so must our love to others be unfeigned, not like the devouring lips, and the wicked heart.

(2.) Earnestly, as we love ourselves, without coldness and remissness, Matt. xxiv. 12. This is a fire that should never slacken, but burn intensely.

(3.) Constantly, without changing. Though they be not so favourable to us at all times, yet we are still to love them as ourselves. Our love to them must not be suspended on their love to us, and the effects of it: but it must glow to them, even though we meet with ungrateful returns.

Fourthly, I shall now draw some inferences from this point, the loving of our neighbour as ourselves.

Inf. 1. Great need have we to have our self-love rectified. For, as when the rule is wrong, nothing can be right that is regulated by it; so, when our love to ourselves is wrong, we cannot rightly love our neighbour. This is the love of companions in sin, who involve themselves and one another in one common ruin.

2. All the commands of the second table have respect to ourselves in the first place as our nearest neighbour. Thus, 'Thou shalt not kill;' that is, thou shalt not kill thyself nor thy neighbour. So the duties of religion are reduced to these three, to 'live soberly, righteously, and godly,' Tit. ii. 12.

3. Hatred of our neighbour is an universal sin against the commands of the second table; as love to our neighbour is the chief, comprehensive, and universal duty of the second table, so is the hatred of our neighbour, the chief, comprehensive, and universal sin against that table.

4. Several persons are reproveable here.

(1.) Those that in effect do not love themselves, but go on in sinful courses, ruining to their bodies, and ruining to their souls; who

treat themselves as the worst of enemies. Men must answer to God for this; for their souls and their bodies are not their own, but the Lord's.

(2.) Those that love themselves only, and not their neighbours; who value not how it be with others, if it go well with themselves; and can comfortably build up themselves on the ruin of others. All seek their own things. This is a most base and selfish disposition, destructive of society, and very offensive to God.

(3.) Those that love some of their neighbours, but not all. One will say, Such an one is my enemy; be it so, but yet love to him is law; and his enmity against you cannot dissolve the obligation of the law of God to love him. Love him that he may be thy friend; love him, but not his faults. The more need he has of thy love, that he may be reclaimed; as we run to the physician for love to the man, not to his disease. The loving and shewing love to one that is our enemy, is the fairest and readiest way to reclaim and gain him. If any thing will do it, this is the most sensible means.

(4.) Those that love in word, but hate in heart; that love like Joab and Judas: they that speak fair to a man's face, but would cut his throat behind his back. Such a practice is abominable hypocrisy, odious to God, and nauseous to every honest man.

(5.) Those that pretend to love their neighbour, but their love is fruitless; their neighbour is never the better of it. They say they love such a one; but they never give him good counsel, though he stands in need of it; they do him no service, though it be in their power, and his circumstances require it. Such love is all pretence, without substance or reality.

6. *Lastly*, They that do not love the Lord's people, who are their best neighbours, the substance and strength of a church and nation, who are, as Elijah was, 'the chariots of Israel, and the horsemen thereof.' Love is a duty to them above all men, for what they are in themselves, lovers of God, and all good men, and for the relation they stand in to God, as his people, his redeemed, and sanctified ones, who when the time of their warfare here is accomplished, shall be translated to the kingdom of glory, to the house not made with hands; eternal in the heavens. Not to love them is a great sin, inconsistent with the law and love of God; and to hate them, especially on account of their goodness, is direct rebellion against God, an insult to the Majesty of heaven, whose subjects and servants they are.

5. Let us study to love our neighbour, and to bury all strifes, animosities, hatred, and malice. For motives, consider,

1. That little love to our neighbour is a sad sign of little love to

God, 1 John iv. 20. 'If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar; for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?'

(2.) Consider the bond of one common nature, which should cement and knit together all of the same species.—Lions and Wolves do not prey on their own kind, but shew kindness to one another. As men are of one common nature derived from Adam, should they not love and shew kindness to one another? for they are strictly brethren, and are as strictly bound to love one another as such.

(3.) Consider the love of God and Christ to men. It was most free unmerited, unsought, and unsolicited. They loved not friends but enemies and rebels, who had taken up arms against their Creator and Sovereign Lord. Men had by their sin involved themselves in utter ruin, and could not help themselves. In such deplorable circumstances did God fix his love on them, and send his Son to redeem them from the curse of the law, and from the wrath to come, by laying down his life for them. And shall not such a glorious and unspeakable instance of the love of the great God, and his Son Jesus Christ, to the ruined race of fallen man, excite and stir us up to love our neighbour, and to do him all the service we can, both as to his temporal and eternal interests?

Lastly, How happy would the world be if men loved others as themselves? Suppose ten men; so love would contract ten into one, and multiply one into ten. How happy would each of these ten be, who would have ten hearts to care for him, twenty eyes to see for him, twenty hands to work for him, and twenty feet to travel for him!

Let the Lord's people especially love one another. They are the Sons of God, and the brethren of Christ. God loved them with an everlasting love, and with loving-kindness he drew them to himself. Christ redeemed them at no less price than that of his most precious blood. The Holy Spirit is their Sanctifier and Comforter, and will abide with them for ever. They are members of one family, fellow-citizens, and of the household of faith. They are members of one body, of which Christ is the head. They have one Lord, one faith, one baptism, and one hope of their calling. They have all fled from one city, that of sin and destruction; and they are all travelling unto one heavenly country. They are all clothed with one garment, the complete righteousness of their Surety and High Priest. They are all the spouse of Christ, who is one. They are all brethren, children of the promise. Shall then such persons fall out by the way? Nay, shall they not dearly love one another? 'Be kindly

affectionate one to another, (says the apostle), with brotherly love,' Rom. xii. 10. 'Let brotherly love continue,' Heb. xiii. 1. Such love is a sure and infallible sign of your being the friends and followers of Christ. 'By this (says our Lord), shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love to one another.' Be at peace then among yourselves, and shew that ye are subjects of the Prince of peace, and heirs of the legacy of peace which he has left you.

THE PREFACE TO THE TEN COMMANDMENTS.

EXOD. XX. 2.—*I am the Lord thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.*

SOME take these words, which are the first of that speech spoken immediately by God himself, to be a part of the first commandment, shewing who is the true God, that is to be our God. Our Catechism determines them to be a preface to all the commandments; and though they have a particular relation to the first command, 'Thou shalt have no other gods before me,' viz. *The Lord thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage;* yet, seeing the first commandment has a common relation to all of them, and is interwoven with all the rest, and the words natively enforce obedience to the whole, they are set here as a preface to all the commands, like a magnificent entry into a palace, decorated with the arms of the owner. In the words consider,

1. The Speaker and Giver of these commandments. It is *the Lord*, particularly Jesus Christ, who gave this law in the name of the Trinity. This is plain from the scripture, Acts vii. 38. Heb. xii. 24.—26. It was he that brought the people out of Egypt, and that appeared in the bush that burned with fire, and yet was not consumed, giving commission to Moses for their deliverance, Exod. iii. 2.—8.

2. The speech itself, wherein we have a description of the true God, bearing three reasons for the keeping his commands. (1.) From his sovereignty; he is *the Lord*. (2.) From his covenant-relation to his people, *thy God*. (3.) From the great benefit of redemption, and deliverance wrought for them.

DOCT. 'The preface to the ten commandments teacheth us, That because God is the Lord, and our God, and Redeemer, therefore we are bound to keep all his commandments.'