Second Commandment Fourth Commandment

**The SECOND TABLE**

**The FIRST TABLE**

Fifth Commandment

Third Commandment

Sixth…

Seventh..

Eighth…

Ninth and Tenth…

**Toward God**

**Toward Neighbor**

**I. The Source of knowledge of and the Goal for God’s Will for us**

**311** 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.[[1]](#footnote-1)

**A. Do These Works**

Everything that is to be a good work must arise and flow from and in this true fountain and channel.[[2]](#footnote-2)

**B. These are true works unlike the flashy works of the world**

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

314 But the other works cause people to open their eyes and ears wide. Men aid this effect by the great display, expense, and magnificent buildings with which they adorn such works, so that everything shines and glitters. There they waft incense, they sing and ring bells, they light tapers and candles, so that nothing else can be seen or heard. For when a priest stands there in a surplice garment embroidered with gold thread, or a layman continues all day upon his knees in Church, that is regarded as a most precious work, which no one can praise enough. But when a poor girl tends a little child and faithfully does what she is told, that is considered nothing. For what else should monks and nuns seek in their cloisters?

315 Look, is not this a cursed overconfidence of those desperate saints who dare to invent a higher and better life and estate than the Ten Commandments teach? To pretend (as we have said) that this is an ordinary life for the common man, but theirs is for saints and perfect ones?[[3]](#footnote-3)

**II. ALL Commandments are the source of blessing and curse**

**320** For I the Lord your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and the 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]

**321** 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.[[4]](#footnote-4)

**322** 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. **323** 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.[[5]](#footnote-5)

**III. God demands they be fulfilled with a trusting faithful heart**

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.[[6]](#footnote-6)

**IV. This faith satisfies the First and Chief Commandment**

**324** This is exactly the meaning and true interpretation of the first and chief commandment, from which all the others must flow and proceed. So this word, “You shall have no other gods before Me” [Exodus 20:3], in its simplest meaning states nothing other than this demand: You shall fear, love, and trust in Me as your only true God. For where there is a heart set in this way before God, that heart has fulfilled this commandment and all the other commandments. On the other hand, whoever fears and loves anything else in heaven and upon earth will keep neither this nor any of the commandments. **325** So then all the Scriptures have everywhere preached and taught this commandment, aiming always at these two things: fear of God and trust in Him. The prophet David especially does this throughout the Psalms, as when he says “the Lord takes pleasure in those who fear Him, in those who hope in His steadfast love” [Psalm 147:11]. He writes as if the entire commandment were explained by one verse, as if to say, “The Lord takes pleasure in those who have no other gods.”[[7]](#footnote-7)

**V. The First Commandment is the key to the others, such that if it is kept, all others are kept**

326 So the First Commandment is to shine and give its splendor to all the others. Therefore, you must let this declaration run through all the commandments. It is like a hoop in a wreath, joining the end to the beginning and holding them all together. Let it be continually repeated and not forgotten, as the Second Commandment says, so that we fear God and do not take His name in vain for cursing, lying, deceiving, and other ways of leading men astray, or trickery. But we make proper and good use of His name by calling upon Him in prayer, praise, and thanksgiving, derived from love and trust according to the First Commandment. In the same way such fear, love, and trust is to drive and force us not to despise His Word, but gladly to learn it, hear it, value it holy, and honor it.

327 So this teaching continues through all the following commandments toward our neighbor. Everything is to flow from the First Commandment’s power. We honor father and mother, masters, and all in authority, and are subject and obedient to them, not for their own sake, but for God’s sake. You are not to regard or fear father or mother, nor should you do or skip anything because you love them. But note what God would have you do, what He will quite surely demand of you. If you skip that, you have an angry Judge. But if you do the work, you have a gracious Father.

328 Again, do your neighbor no harm, injury, or violence, nor in any way oppress him with regard to his body, wife, property, honor, or rights. All these things are commanded in their order, even though you may have a chance and cause to do wrong and no person would rebuke you. But do good to all men [Galatians 6:10]. Help them and promote their interest—in every way and wherever you can—purely out of love for God and to please Him. Do this in the confidence that He will abundantly reward you for everything. 329 Now you see how the First Commandment is the chief source and fountainhead that flows into all the rest. Note again, all return to that First Commandment and depend upon it. So beginning and end are fastened and bound to each other.[[8]](#footnote-8)

**VI. We should keep the Commandments in our sight, in our minds, and in our hearts**

331 Therefore, it is not meaningless that it is commanded in the Old Testament that we should write the Ten Commandments on all walls and corners, yes, even on our garments [Deuteronomy 6:8–9]. This is not for the sake of merely having them written in these places and making a show of them. The Jewish people did that. But it is so we might have our eyes constantly fixed on them. We should have them always in our memory. Then we might do them in all our actions and ways. 332 Then everyone may make them his daily exercise in all cases, in every business and transaction, as though they were written in every place wherever he would look, indeed, wherever he walks or stands. Then there would be enough opportunity—both at home in our own house and abroad with our neighbors—to do the Ten Commandments, so that no one would need to run far to find them.[[9]](#footnote-9)

**VII. The Commandments are higher than any other earthy teaching**

333 From this it again appears how highly these Ten Commandments are to be exalted and extolled above all estates, commandments, and works that are taught and done apart from them. For here we can boast and say, “Let all the wise people and saints step forth and produce, if they can, a single work like these commandments. God insists on these with such seriousness. He commands them with His greatest wrath and punishment. Besides, He adds such glorious promises to them that He will pour out upon us all good things and blessings. Therefore, they should be taught above all others and be valued precious and dear, as the highest treasure given by God.”[[10]](#footnote-10)

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