

From Your Pastor
A Study of the Shorter Catechism: Law and Love

Question 41: *Where is the moral law summarily comprehended? Answer:* *The moral law is summarily comprehended in the ten commandments. (Deut. 10:4; Matt. 19:17)*

Question 42: *What is the sum of the ten commandments? Answer:* *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 neighbor as ourselves. (Matt. 22:37-40)*

An Explanation: The Bible teaches us that God is love (1 Jo. 4:8), that everything He does is loving (Ex. 34:5-7), and that His commands to His people are loving. The moral law, revealed in the ten commandments, is an expression of God's perfect, exemplary love to His people (Note how often love is defined as obedience to God's commandments in scripture: Exo. 20:6; Deut. 11:1; Neh. 1:5; Psa. 119:47, 127; John 14:21; 15:10; 1 Jo. 5:3). Our Lord Jesus taught that love for God and neighbor was the most important part of the moral law (Matt. 22:39-40).

God revealed the moral law in the ten commandments to teach his redeemed people how to live in a loving way before the world as His dearly beloved children (cf. Eph. 5:1-2). The preface to the ten commandments teaches that God chose His people, released them from slavery, and brought them into His most glorious light to bless them and make them like Him (Exo. 20:1-3; cf. Lev. 19:2). In loving God before all else, as the first commandment teaches, we realize and enjoy the purpose for which we were created. The ten commandments are made up of two tables: commandments one through four teach how to love God, and commandments five through ten teach how to love others as ourselves.

Because we are fallen, sinful, and most unloving by nature, the Father uses the commandments to show us our need of a loving and forgiving Savior and to turn us in repentance to seek the grace and power that is held out for all who believe in Christ Jesus (Gal. 3:19-29).

Jesus is the perfect manifestation of God's love; Jesus teaches us how to love (1 Cor. 13:4-8a). In fact, the Apostle Paul says that the moral law is fulfilled when believers, living in union with Christ, sincerely love God and neighbor as themselves by faith (Rom. 13:8-10). Our Lord Jesus says to us: "If you love me, you will keep my commandments" (John 14:15). This means that when we seek to obey God's commandments by faith in Christ, in dependence upon His grace, we glorify God, experience Christ's joy (John 15:9-11), and fulfill our Creator's purpose.

Prayer: *Teach us to love, dear Heavenly Father. Teach us to love like Christ Jesus. Teach us to love you with all of our beings, and our neighbors as ourselves. Forgive us for our selfish, unloving hearts. Thank you, Jesus, for demonstrating such love for sinners by laying down your life for us to grant forgiveness for our unloving ways. Now, by your grace, we will run in the way of your commandments when you enlarge our hearts, O LORD (Psa. 119:32)!*

"Owe no one anything, except to love each other, for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law. The commandments, 'You shall not commit adultery, You shall not murder, You shall not steal, You shall not covet,' and any other commandment, are summed up in this word: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law."

-Romans 1:8-10 (ESV)