

The Close of the Commandments

What does God say of all these commandments? He says thus: **I the Lord, thy God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate Me, and showing mercy unto thousands of them that love Me and keep My Commandments.**

What does this mean? God threatens to punish all that transgress these commandments. Therefore we should fear his wrath and not act contrary to them. But he promises grace and every blessing to all that keep these Commandments. Therefore we should also love and trust in Him and willingly do according to His Commandments.

1. The Commandments come with both threat and promise. What does “fearing, loving, and trusting in God above all things” have to do with what we do and do not do? *1 Cor 6:9–11; Rom 6:1–14; 12:1–21; Eph 4:17–24.*
2. When we act contrary to the commandments, especially when we do so willfully, who are we really fighting against, and what is the risk? *Heb 6:4–9; 9:11–14; 10:19–39.*

From Luther's *Large Catechism* (I: Ten Commandments)

³¹¹ Thus we have the Ten Commandments, a compend of divine doctrine, as to what we are to do in order that our whole life may be pleasing to God, and the true fountain and channel from and in which everything must arise and flow that is to be a good work, so that outside of the Ten Commandments no work or thing can be good or pleasing to God, however great or precious it be in the eyes of the world...

³¹³ I am of opinion, indeed, that here one will find his hands full, [and will have enough] to do to observe these, namely, meekness, patience, and love towards enemies, chastity, kindness, etc., and what such virtues imply...

³¹⁶ And the miserable blind people do not see that no man can get so far as to keep one of the Ten Commandments as it should be kept, but both the Apostles' Creed and the Lord's Prayer must come to our aid (as we shall hear), by which that [power and strength to keep the commandments] is sought and prayed for and received continually...

^{322–323} Now, there is comprehended in these words (as said before) both an angry word of threatening and a friendly promise to terrify and warn us, and, moreover, to induce and encourage us to receive and highly esteem His Word as a matter of divine earnestness, because He Himself declares how much He is concerned about it, and how rigidly He will enforce it, namely, that He will horribly and terribly punish all who despise and transgress His commandments; and again, how richly He will reward, bless, and do all good to those who hold them in high esteem, and gladly do and live according to them. Thus He demands that all our works proceed from a heart which fears and regards God alone, and from such fear avoids everything that is contrary to His will, lest it should move Him to wrath; and, on the other hand, also trusts in Him alone and from love to Him does all He wishes, because he speaks to us as friendly as a father, and offers us all grace and every good.