

From Your Pastor

A Study of the Shorter Catechism: A Gracious and Holy God

Question 43: *What is the preface to the ten commandments?* **Answer:** *The preface to the ten commandments is in these words, I am the Lord thy God which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage (Exod. 20:2).*

Question 44: *What doth the preface to the ten commandments teach us?* **Answer:** *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 (Luke 1:74,75; 1 Pet. 1:15-19).*

Memory Verses: *"...That we, being delivered from the hand of our enemies, might serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him all our days" (Luke 1:74-75).*

An Explanation: Zechariah's song of praise in Luke 1:74-75 summarizes how we are to think of and live out our lives before God as His beloved children: in fearless, courageous, and holy obedience to His commands. Why? Because He is Lord and King, and in Jesus Christ, Redeemer and Father! Before revealing the Ten Commandments in Exodus 20, God reveals His saving love, grace, and power for believers, so that we might remember that we need these gifts from His Spirit in order to live the holy and righteous lives He has called us to in Christ. Without grace, no sinner could ever please God and perfectly keep God's commandments in thoughts, words, and/or deeds. The Law revealed in the Ten Commandments is a revelation of the character and will of God, and as His creatures, we should all seek to honor Him by glorifying and enjoying Him through obedience. Because of our sinfulness, we need God's effectual call by His Spirit to make us alive and bring us into the light, granting us His immeasurable power so that we might desire to obey and enjoy Him! In the preface to the Ten Commandments, we see, as Dr. Joel Beeke has written, that in the time of the law there is grace; in the time of grace, there is law. In justification, law and grace are opposed; in sanctification, law and grace are friends (Rom. 8:1-4). God teaches believers that our deliverance is all because of His grace—nothing that we have done, merited, or earned: "I am the LORD your God, who brought you...out of the house of slavery" (Ex. 20:2). Salvation is a deliverance from slavery, not merely the real, physical bondage of Egypt, but the spiritual bondage and oppression of sin and the evil one. Once delivered, believers are brought into a state of grace (Col. 1:13-14) so that we are obligated (privileged!) to live holy and righteous lives before God and the world. This way of freedom, holiness, and righteousness in Christ is particularly revealed in the Ten Commandments.

As we go through the Ten Commandments in the next few questions from the Shorter Catechism, let us keep in mind an illustration: the Law of God can be likened to an enchanted mirror which we can see both *in* and *through*. We look *through* the mirror to see the perfect character of our God. We look *in* the mirror and see the reflection of our lives in light of His righteousness. We look *through* and see a gracious and forgiving God who provides all the power we need to live holy lives. We look *in* and see ourselves and where we need to repent of our sins and seek Christ. We look *through* the mirror to behold the happy and joyful life we were created to live, and *in* the mirror to behold both our progress in living before Christ Jesus and the ongoing need of repentance and forgiveness in Him!

Prayer: *Father God, thank you that you have delivered me from slavery and bondage to sin and Satan. Let me live before you all the days of my life in holiness and righteousness, serving you without fear.*

"Why is it thought incredible by any of you that God raises the dead?"

-Acts 26:8