



Session Two: The Ten Commandments

First Commandment: You shall have no other gods.

What does this mean? We should fear, love, and trust in God above all things

LC: "Whatever you set your heart on and put your trust in is truly your god... Here you have the meaning of the true honor and worship of God... The heart knows no other comfort or confidence than in Him. It must not allow itself to be torn from Him. But, for Him, it must risk and disregard everything on earth." (359-360)

Second Commandment: You shall not take the name of the Lord, your God, in vain.

What does this mean? We should fear and love God so that we do not curse, swear, use witchcraft, lie, or deceive by His name, but call upon it in every trouble, pray, praise, and give thanks.

LC: "The first things that spring from the heart and show themselves are words... Children should be constantly urged and moved to honor God's name and to have it always upon their lips for everything that may happen to them or come to their notice. For that is the true honor of His name, to look to it and call upon it for all consolation. Then – as we have heard in the first commandment – the heart by faith gives God the honor due Him first. Afterward, the lips give Him honor by confession." (364, 366)

Third Commandment: You shall sanctify the holy day.

What does this mean? We should fear and love God so that we do not despise preaching or His word, but hold it sacred, and gladly hear and learn it..

LC: "This commandment, in its literal sense, does not apply to us Christians...keeping of the Sabbath is not restricted to a certain time, as with the Jewish people...The day needs no sanctification for itself. It has been created holy in itself. But God desires the day to be holy to you. Therefore, it becomes holy or unholy because of you, whether you are occupied on that day with things that are holy or unholy. How then does such sanctification take place? Not by sitting behind the stove and doing no rough work...[but] we occupy ourselves with God's Word and exercise ourselves in the Word."(367-368)

Fourth Commandment: You shall honor your father and your mother.

What does this mean? We should fear and love God so that we may not despise or anger our parents and masters, but give them honor, serve, them, obey them, and hold them in love and esteem..

LC: "So far we have learned the first three commandments, which relate to God... Now follow the other seven commandments, which relate to our neighbor...To the position of fatherhood and motherhood God has given special distinction above all positions that are beneath it: He does not simply command us to love our parents, but to honor them... Do this not because of the worthiness of parents, but because this work is included in, and controlled by...the Word and commandment of God... We have two kinds of fathers presented in this commandment: fathers in blood and fathers in office...besides these there are still spiritual fathers." (371-377)



Fifth Commandment: You shall not murder.

What does this mean? We should fear and love God so that we do not hurt or harm our neighbor in his body, but help and befriend him in every bodily need..

LC: "Where murder is forbidden, all cause from which murder may spring is also forbidden... God wants to remove the root and source by which the heart is embittered against our neighbor... In the first place, we must harm no one... [Second,] it also applies to anyone who can do his neighbor good, prevent or resist evil, defend, and save his neighbor so that no bodily harm or hurt happen to him – yet does not do this... God also rightly calls all people murderers who do not provide counsel and help in distress and danger of body and life." (379-380)

Sixth Commandment: You shall not commit adultery.

What does this mean? We should fear and love God so that we may lead a pure and decent life in words and deeds, and each love and honor his spouse.

LC: "The following commandments are easily understood from the explanation of the preceding commandments. For they are all to show that we must avoid doing any kind of harm to our neighbor. But they are arranged in fine order. In the first place, they talk about our neighbor personally. Then they proceed to talk about the person nearest him... This commandment is directed against all kinds of unchastity, whatever it may be called... Not only this, but we must also resist temptation, offer protection, and rescue honor wherever there is danger and need... To speak in the briefest way, this much is required of you: everyone must live chastely himself and help his neighbor do to the same." (381-383)

Seventh Commandment: You shall not steal.

What does this mean? We should fear and love God so that we may not take our neighbor's money or property, nor get them with bad products or deals, but help him to improve and protect his property and business..

LC: "Mechanics, workmen, and day laborers... never know enough ways to overcharge people... In the market... one openly cheats another with bad merchandise; false measures; and by nimbleness and strange finances... [Yet] we might be silent about the petty individual thieves if we were to attack the great, powerful archthieves with whom lords and princes keep company... [Everyone] must do no harm to his neighbor nor deprive him of profit nor commit any act of unfaithfulness or hatred in any bargain or trade... God punishes one thief by means of another." (384-385)

Eighth Commandment: You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.

What does this mean? We should fear and love God so that we may not deceitfully belie, betray, slander, or defame our neighbor, but defend him, think and speak well of him, and put the best construction on everything..

LC: "Here belongs particularly the detestable, shameful vice of speaking behind a person's back and slandering, to which the devil spurs us on... It is a common evil plague that everyone prefers hearing evil more than hearing good about his neighbor. We ourselves are so bad that we cannot allow anyone to say anything bad about us... If I rush in, judging and passing sentence, I fall into a sin that is greater than his... But where the sin is public, so that the judge and everybody know about it, you can without any sin shun the offender and let him go his own way." (389-391)



Ninth Commandment: You shall not covet your neighbor's house.

What does this mean? We should fear and love God so that we may not craftily seek to get our neighbor's inheritance or house, or obtain it by a show of justice and right, or any other means, but help and be of service to him in keeping it..

Tenth Commandment: You shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or his manservant, or his maidservant, or his cattle, or anything that is his.

What does this mean? We should fear and love God so that we may not turn, force, or entice away our neighbor's wife, servants, or cattle, but urge them to stay and carefully do their duty..

LC: "He added [these commandments] especially because under the Jewish government, manservant and maidservants were not free as now to serve for wages as long as they pleased... Further, every man had power over his wife to put her away publicly by giving her a bill of divorce... Here it is also forbidden for you to alienate anything from your neighbor, even though you could do so with honor in the eyes of the world." (393)

What does God say about all these commands?

He says: "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)

What does this mean? God threatens to punish all who sin against these commandments. Therefore, we should fear His wrath and not act contrary to these commandments. But He promises grace and every blessing to all who keep these commandments. Therefore, we should also love and trust in Him and gladly do what He commands.

LC: "Hard heads imagine that God overlooks and allows them to rest in security, or that He is entirely ignorant or cares nothing about such matters. Therefore, God must deal a smashing blow and punish them, so that He cannot forget there sin unto their children's children. In that way, everyone may take note and see that this is no joke to him... But as terrible as these threatenings are, so much more powerful is the consolation in the promise. For those who cling to God alone should be sure that He will show them mercy. In other words, He will show them pure goodness and blessing, not only for themselves, but also to their children and their children's children even to the thousandth generation and beyond that." (362)

LC: "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. But such works are not of value and make no display in the world's eyes... 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... Just occupy yourself with [the commandments]. Try your best. Apply all power and ability. You will find so much to do that you will neither seek nor value any other work or holiness." (395)