

Articles and Sermons :: Love to God (Unabridged) -Watson

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(from the book "The Ten Commandments")

<http://www.ccel.org/ccel/watson/commandments.html>

The rule of obedience being the moral law, comprehended in the Ten Commandments, the next question is:

What is the sum of the Ten Commandments?

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 neighbour as ourselves.

Â'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might.Â' Deut 6: 5. The duty called for is love, yea, the strength of love, Â'with all thy heart.Â' God will lose none of our love. Love is the soul of religion, and that which constitutes a real Christian. Love is the queen of graces; it shines and sparkles in GodÂ's eye, as the precious stones on the breastplate of Aaron.

What is love?

It is a holy fire kindled in the affections, whereby a Christian is carried out strongly after God as the supreme good.

What is the antecedent of love to God?

The antecedent of love is knowledge. The Spirit shines upon the understanding, and discovers the beauties of wisdom, holiness, and mercy in God; and these are the loadstone to entice and draw out love to God; Ignoti nulla cupido: such as know not God cannot love him; if the sun be set in the understanding, there must needs be night in the affections.

Wherein does the formal nature of love consist?

The nature of love consists in delighting in an object. Complacentia amantis in amato. Aquinas. This is loving God, to take delight in him. Â'Delight thyself also in the LordÂ' (Psa 37: 4), as a bride delights herself in her jewels. Grace changes a ChristianÂ's aims and delights.

How must our love to God be qualified?

(1) If it be a sincere love, we love God with all our heart. Â'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart.Â' God will have the whole heart. We must not divide our love between him and sin. The true mother would not have the child divided, nor will God have the heart divided; it must be the whole heart.

(2) We must love God propter se, for himself, for his own intrinsic excellencies. We must love him for his loveliness. Meretricius est amor plus

annulum quam sponsum amare: 'It is a harlot's love to love the portion more than the person.' Hypocrites love God because he gives them corn and wine: we must love God for himself; for those shining perfections which are in him. Gold is loved for itself.

(3) We must love God with all our might, in the Hebrew text, our vehemency; we must love God, quod posse, as much as we are able. Christians should be like seraphim, burning in holy love. We can never love God so much as he deserves. The angels in heaven cannot love God so much as he deserves.

(4) Love to God must be active in its sphere. Love is an industrious affection; it sets the head studying for God, hands working, feet running in the ways of his commandments. It is called the labour of love. 1 Thess 1: 3. Mary Magdalene loved Christ, and poured her ointments on him. We think we never do enough for the person whom we love.

(5) Love to God must be superlative. God is the essence of beauty, a whole paradise of delight; and he must have a priority in our love. Our love to God must be above all things besides, as the oil swims above the water. We must love God above estate and relations. Great is the love to relations. There is a story in the French Academy, of a daughter, who, when her father was condemned to die by hunger, gave him suck with her own breasts. But our love to God must be above father and mother. Matt 10: 37. We may give the creature the milk of our love, but God must have the cream. The spouse keeps the juice of her pomegranates for Christ. Cant 8: 2.

(6) Our love to God must be constant, like the fire which the Vestal virgins kept in Rome, which did not go out. Love must be like the motion of the pulse, which beats as long as there is life. 'Many waters cannot quench love,' not the waters of persecution. Cant 8: 7. 'Rooted in love.' Eph 3: 17. A branch withers that does not grow on a root; so love, that it may not die, must be well rooted.

What are the visible signs of our love to God?

If we love God, our desire will be after him. 'The desire of our soul is to thy name.' Isa 26: 8. He who loves God, breathes after communion with him. 'My soul thirsteth for the living God.' Psa 42: 2. Persons in love desire to be often conferring together. He who loves God, desires to be much in his presence; he loves the ordinances: they are the glass where the glory of God is resplendent; in the ordinances we meet with him whom our souls love; we have God's smiles and whispers, and some foretastes of heaven. Such as have no desire after ordinances, have no love to God.

The second visible sign is, that he who loves God cannot find contentment in any thing without him. Give a hypocrite who pretends to love God corn and wine, and he can be content without God; but a soul fired with love to God, cannot be without him. Lovers faint away if they have not a sight of the object loved. A gracious soul can do without health, but cannot do without God, who is the health of his countenance. Psa 43: 5. If God should say to a soul that entirely loves him, 'Take thy ease, swim in pleasure, solace thyself in the delights of the world; but thou shalt not enjoy my presence;' this would not content it. Nay, if God should say, 'I will let thee be taken up to heaven, but I will retire into another room, and thou shalt not see my face;' it would not content the soul. It is hell to be without God. The philosopher says there can be no gold without the influence of the sun; certainly there can be no golden joy in the soul without God's sweet presence and influence.

The third visible sign is that he who loves God, hates that which would separate between him and God, and that is sin. Sin makes God hide his face; it is like an incendiary, which parts chief friends; therefore, the keenness of a Christian's hatred is set against it. 'I hate every false way.' Psa 119: 128. Antipathies can never be reconciled; one cannot love health but he must hate poison; so we cannot love God but we must hate sin, which would destroy our communion with him.

The fourth visible sign is sympathy. Friends that love, grieve for the evils which befall each other. Homer, describing Agamemnon's grief, when he was forced to sacrifice his daughter, brings in all his friends weeping with him, and accompanying him to the sacrifice, in mourning. Lovers grieve together. If we have true love in our heart to God, we cannot but grieve for those things which grieve him; we shall lay to heart his dishonours; the luxury, drunkenness, contempt of God and religion. 'Rivers of waters run down mine eyes,' &c. Psa 119: 136. Some speak of the sins of others, and laugh at them; but they surely have no love to God who can laugh at that which grieves his Spirit! Does he love his father who can laugh to hear him reproached?

The fifth visible sign is, that he who loves God, labours to render him lovely to others. He not only admires God, but speaks in his praises, that he may allure and draw others to be in love with him. She that is in love will commend her lover. The lovesick spouse extols Christ, she makes a panegyric oration of his worth, that she might persuade others to be in love with him. 'His head is as the most fine gold.' Cant 5: 11. True love to God cannot be silent, it will be eloquent in setting forth his renown. There is no better sign of loving God than to make him appear lovely, and to draw proselytes to him.

The sixth visible sign is, that he who loves God, weeps bitterly for his absence. Mary comes weeping, 'They have taken away my Lord.' John 20: 13. One cries, 'My health is gone!' another, 'My estate is gone!' but he who is a lover of God, cries out, 'My God is gone! I cannot enjoy him whom I love.' What can all worldly comforts do, when once God is absent? It is like a funeral banquet, where there is much meat, but no cheer. 'I went mourning without the sun.' Job 30: 28. If Rachel mourned greatly for the loss of her children, what veil or pencil can shadow out the sorrow of that Christian who has lost God's sweet presence? Such a soul pours forth floods of tears; and while it is lamenting, seems to say thus to God, 'Lord, thou art in heaven, hearing the melodious songs and triumph of angels; but I sit here in the valley of tears, weeping because thou art gone. Oh, when wilt thou come to me, and revive me with the light of thy countenance! Or, Lord, if thou wilt not come to me, let me come to thee, where I shall have a perpetual smile of thy face in heaven and shall never more complain, 'My beloved has withdrawn himself.'"

The seventh visible sign is, that he who loves God is willing to do and suffer for him. He subscribes to God's commands, he submits to his will. He subscribes to his commands. If God bids him mortify sin, love his enemies, be crucified to the world, he obeys. It is a vain thing for a man to say he loves God, and slight his commands. He submits to his will. If God would have him suffer for him, he does not dispute, but obeys. 'Love endureth all things.' 1 Cor 13: 7. Love made Christ suffer for us, and love will make us suffer for him. It is true that every Christian is not a martyr but he has a spirit of martyrdom in him; he has a disposition of mind to suffer, if God call him to it. 'I am ready to be offered.' 2 Tim 4: 6. Not only the

sufferings were ready for Paul, but he was ready for the sufferings. Origin chose rather to live despised in Alexandria, than with Plotinus to deny the faith, and be great in the prince's favour. Rev 12: 11. Many say they love God, but will not suffer the loss of anything for him. If Christ should have said to us, 'I love you well, you are dear to me, but I cannot suffer for you, I cannot lay down my life for you,' we should have questioned his love very much; and may not the Lord question ours, when we pretend love to him, but will endure nothing for his sake?

Use one. What shall we say to those who have not a drachm of love in their hearts to God? They have their life from him, yet do not love him. He spreads their table every day, yet they do not love him. Sinners dread God as a judge, but do not love him as a father. All the strength in the angels cannot make the heart love God; judgements will not do it; omnipotent grace only can make a stony heart melt in love. How sad is it to be void of love to God. When the body is cold, and has no heat, it is a sign of death; so he is spiritually dead who has no heat of love in his heart to God. Shall such live with God that do not love him? Will God lay an enemy in his bosom? They shall be bound in chains of darkness who will not be drawn with cords of love.

Use two. Let us be persuaded to love God with all our heart and might. O let us take our love off from other things, and place it upon God. Love is the heart of religion, the fat of the offering; it is the grace which Christ inquires most after. 'Simon lovest thou me?' John 21: 15. Love makes all our services acceptable, it is the musk that perfumes them. It is not so much duty, as love to duty, God delights in; therefore serving and loving God are put together. Isa 56: 6. It is better to love him than to serve him; obedience without love, is like wine without the spirit. O then, be persuaded to love God with all your heart and might.

(1) It is nothing but your love that God desires. The Lord might have demanded your children to be offered in sacrifice; he might have bid you cut and lance yourselves, or lie in hell awhile; but he only desires your love, he would only have this flower. Is it a hard request, to love God? Was ever any debt easier paid than this? Is it any labour for the wife to love her husband? Love is delightful. Non potest amor esse, et dulcis non esse. Bernard. What is there in our love that God should desire it? Why should a king desire the love of a woman that is in debt and diseased? God does not need our love. There are angels enough in heaven to adore and love him. What is God the better for our love? It adds not the least cubit to his essential blessedness. He does not need our love, and yet he seeks it. Why does he desire us to give him our heart? Prov 23: 26. Not that he needs our heart, but that he may make it better.

(2) Great will be our advantage if we love God. He does not court our love that we should lose by it. 'Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, the things which God has prepared for them that love him.' 1 Cor 2: 9. If you will love him, you shall have such a reward as exceeds your faith. He will betroth you to himself in the dearest love. 'I will betroth thee unto me for ever, in loving kindness and in mercies.' Hos 2: 19. 'The Lord thy God will rest in his love, he will joy over thee with singing.' Zeph 3: 17. If you love God, he will interest you in all his riches and dignities, he will give you heaven and earth for your dowry, he will set a crown on your head. Vespasian the emperor gave a great reward to a woman who came to him, and professed she loved him; but God gives a crown of life to them that love him. James 1: 12.

(3) Love is the only grace that shall live with us in heaven. In heaven we

shall need no repentance, because we shall have no sin; no faith, because we shall see God face to face; but love to God shall abide for ever. Â‘Love never faileth.Â’ 1 Cor 13: 8. How should we nourish this grace which shall outlive all the graces, and run parallel with eternity!

(4) Our love to God is a sign of his love to us. Â‘We love him because he first loved us.Â’ 1 John 4: 19. By nature we have no love to God; we have hearts of stone. Ezek 36: 26. And how can any love be in hearts of stone? Our loving him is from his loving us. If the glass burn, it is because the sun has shone on it; so if our hearts burn in love, it is a sign the Sun of Righteousness has shone upon us.

What shall we do in order to love God aright?

(1) Wait on the preaching of the word. As faith comes by hearing, so does love. The word sets forth God in his incomparable excellencies; it deciphers and pencils him out in all his glory, and a sight of his beauty inflames love.

(2) Beg of God that he will give you a heart to love him. When king Solomon asked wisdom of God, it pleased the Lord. 1 Kings 3: 10. So, when thou criest to God, Lord give me a heart to love thee, it is my grief I can love thee no more; surely this prayer will please the Lord, and he will pour out his Spirit upon thee. His golden oil will make the lamp of thy love burn bright.

(3) You who have love to God, keep it flaming upon the altar of your heart. Love, like fire, is ever ready to go out. Â‘Thou hast left thy first love.Â’ Rev 2: 4. Through neglect of duty, or too much love of the world, our love to God will cool. O preserve your love to him. As you would be careful to preserve the natural heat in your body, so be careful to preserve the heat of love to God in your soul. Love is like oil to the wheels, it quickens us in God’s service. When you find love abate and cool, use all means to quicken it. When the fire is going out, you throw on fuel; so when the flame of love is going out, make use of the ordinances as sacred fuel to keep the fire of your love burning.