

Shorter Catechism: Question 39

Obedience to God's Revealed Will

Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God and keep His commandments, For this is man's all. –Ecclesiastes

The Word of God. 1 Samuel 15

²² So Samuel said: "Has the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, As in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, And to heed than the fat of rams. ²³ For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, And stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of the Lord, He also has rejected you from *being* king."

- **John Murray** – "In the attempt to discover the origin of the norms and canons of the biblical ethic, we must not forget that love to God with all our heart and soul and strength and mind and love to our neighbor as ourselves are themselves commandments. We are *commanded* to love God and our neighbor. The antithesis which is oftentimes set up between love and commandment overlooks this elementary fact. Love itself is exercised in obedience to a commandment – 'Thou shalt love'".
- **Matthew Henry** - "Obedience was the law of innocency, but sacrifice supposes sin come into the world, and is but a feeble attempt to take that away which obedience would have prevented. God is more glorified and self more denied by obedience than by sacrifice. It is much easier to bring a bullock or lamb to be burnt upon the altar than to bring *every high thought into obedience* to God and the will subject to his will."
- **Isaiah 1** – ¹¹ "To what purpose *is* the multitude of your sacrifices to Me?" Says the Lord. "I have had enough of burnt offerings of rams And the fat of fed cattle. I do not delight in the blood of bulls, Or of lambs or goats. ¹² "When you come to appear before Me, who has required this from your hand, To trample My courts? ¹³ Bring no more futile sacrifices; Incense is an abomination to Me. The New Moons, the Sabbaths, and the calling of assemblies— I cannot endure iniquity and the sacred meeting.¹⁴ Your New Moons and your appointed feasts My soul hates; They are a trouble to Me, I am weary of bearing *them*. ¹⁵ When you spread out your hands, I will hide My eyes from you; Even though you make many prayers, I will not hear. Your hands are full of blood. ¹⁶ "Wash yourselves, make yourselves clean; Put away the evil of your doings from before My eyes. Cease to do evil, ¹⁷ Learn to do good; Seek justice, Rebuke the oppressor; Defend the fatherless, Plead for the widow. ¹⁸ "Come now, and let us reason together," Says the Lord, "Though your sins are like scarlet, They shall be as white as snow; Though they are red like crimson, They shall be as wool. If you are willing and obedient, You shall eat the good of the land; ²⁰ But if you refuse and rebel, You shall be devoured by the sword"; For the mouth of the Lord has spoken.

Shorter Catechism: Bird's Eye View

Question	Topic
#39	What is the duty which God requireth of man?
#40	What did God at first reveal to man for the rule of his obedience?
#41	Where is the moral law summarily comprehended?
#42	What is the sum of the ten commandments?

Question

- **What is the duty which God requireth of man?** The duty which God requireth of man, is obedience to his revealed will. [Mic. 6:8](#); [1 Sam. 15:22](#).

Principles for Proper Obedience

- Demonstration of *Regeneration, Faith and Obedience* in **1 John 5** - Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and everyone who loves Him who begot also loves him who is begotten of Him. ²By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and keep His commandments. ³For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome.
- **James Fisher** – Q. Why are the principles of faith, in the Shorter Catechism, treated of, before duties of obedience? A. To show, that man's duty cannot be rightly performed, unless it flow from a belief of these principles, as the root and spring of it, Heb. 11:6.
- **A Living Physical Person (Body and Soul), A Living Spiritual Person (Faith and Works)**
 - **James 2** - ²⁶For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.
- **Key Concept in the Structure of the Catechism** - Our obedience stems from faith, but a faith that understands the nature of who it is that we have faith in.
- **AA Hodge** - The character of God's will, and therefore of our duty, depends upon what has already been considered—God's nature, his relations to us and purposes concerning us, as manifested in his works of creation, providence and redemption. If he be holy, "the law is holy and the commandment holy, just and good" (Rom. 7:12). If we be his creatures and his elect, formed, preserved and redeemed "to glorify God and enjoy him for ever," then we must be perfect as he is perfect, conformed unto his likeness (Gen. 1:26; 1 Pet. 1:16; Rom. 8:29). Therefore, this will of God is absolutely unchangeable, obligatory upon all and under all circumstances. It cannot be modified to suit man's ability. It was in force before and after the fall, and under both dispensations. It is the foundation of every covenant. Salvation is possible only by the perfect satisfaction of this law by Christ in behalf of his people, and we as such must keep his commandments (Romans).
- **Micah 6** – ⁸ He has shown you, O man, what *is* good; And what does the Lord require of you But to do justly, To love mercy, And to walk humbly with your God?

To God's Revealed Will

Revealed vs. Secret Will

- **Thomas Vincent** - Q. 4. Hath God any other will than that which he hath revealed? A. God hath a secret will of his counsel concerning all things which come to pass, and this cannot be known as to most things beforehand, and therefore is no rule for our obedience.
- **Deuteronomy 29** - ²⁹ "The secret *things belong* to the Lord our God, but those *things which are revealed belong* to us and to our children forever, that *we may do all the words of this law.*
- **Thomas Vincent** - What is the difference between God's secret will and God's revealed will? A. God's secret will is concerning all things that are done, and shall be done; and doth extend even unto sinful actions, which he doth will to permit, and determine, and direct beyond man's will and intention, to his own glory. But God's revealed will is concerning those things which may and ought to be done, and doth extend only unto those things which are duty, and which in themselves do tend to God's glory; and this revealed will is the rule of man's obedience.
- **Thomas Vincent** - Where is the revealed will of God to be found? A. The revealed will of God is to be found in the Scriptures, where the whole duty of man to God is made known. "He hath showed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?" — Micah 6:8.

What is Legalism? Not what you might think

- **Matthew 15** - ⁷ Hypocrites! Well did Isaiah prophesy about you, saying: ⁸ *'These people draw near to Me with their mouth, And honor Me with their lips, But their heart is far from Me. ⁹ And in vain they worship Me, Teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.'* "
- **Fisher** - Why is our obedience limited to God's revealed will? A. Because it is necessary that God should signify to us, in what instances he will be obeyed, and the manner how our obedience is to be performed; otherwise, it would rather be a fulfilling of our own will than his, Mic. 6:8.
- **Confession of Faith, Chapter 20: "Of Christian Liberty, and Liberty of Conscience"**
 - **2.** God alone is Lord of the conscience, (James 4:12, Rom. 14:4) and hath left it free from the doctrines and commandments of men, which are, in any thing, contrary to His Word; or beside it, if matters of faith, or worship. (Acts 4:19, Acts 5:29, 1 Cor. 7:23, Matt. 23:8–10, 2 Cor. 1:24, Matt. 15:9) So that, to believe such doctrines, or to obey such commands, out of conscience, is to betray true liberty of conscience: (Col. 2:20, 22–23, Gal. 1:10, Gal. 2:4–5, Gal. 5:1) and the requiring of an implicit faith, and an absolute and blind obedience, is to destroy liberty of conscience, and reason also. (Rom. 10:17, Rom. 14:23, Isa. 8:20, Acts 17:11, John 4:22, Hos. 5:11, Rev. 13:12, 16–17, Jer. 8:9)

- **John Flavel** - It is highly sinful and dangerous to command others, or obey commands from others, which are not according to God's command; **Hosea 5:11**. Ephraim is oppressed and broken in judgment, because he willingly walked by *human* precept.

Jesus' Perfect Obedience For His People

- **Romans 5** - ¹⁹ For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so also by one Man's obedience many will be made righteous.

Next Time

- **Hodge** - We are to consider (1) our duty as revealed in the ten commandments; (2) the preface to them; (3) the first table, as containing our duty to God; and (4) the second table, our duty to man.