

Shorter Catechism: Questions 43, 44

The Preface to the Ten Commandments

The Lord God of the Hebrews has sent me to you, saying, "Let My people go, that they may serve Me" – Exodus 7

Word of God (Luke 1:67-79)

⁶⁷ Now his father Zacharias was filled with the Holy Spirit, and prophesied, saying:

⁶⁸ "**Blessed is the Lord God of Israel, For He has visited and redeemed His people,**

⁶⁹ And has raised up a horn of salvation for us In the **house of His servant David,**

⁷⁰ As He spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets, Who *have been* since the world began,

⁷¹ **That we should be saved from our enemies** And from the hand of all who hate us,

⁷² To perform the mercy *promised* to our fathers And **to remember His holy covenant,**

⁷³ The **oath which He swore** to our father Abraham:

⁷⁴ **To grant us that we, Being delivered from the hand of our enemies, Might serve Him without fear,**

⁷⁵ **In holiness and righteousness before Him all the days of our life.**

⁷⁶ "And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Highest; For you will go before the face of the Lord to prepare His ways,

⁷⁷ **To give knowledge of salvation to His people** By the remission of their sins,

⁷⁸ Through the tender mercy of our God, With which the Dayspring from on high has visited us;

⁷⁹ To give light to those who sit in darkness and the shadow of death, To guide our feet into the way of peace."

Exodus 7 - ¹⁶ And you shall say to him, "The Lord God of the Hebrews has sent me to you, saying, "Let My people go, that they may serve Me in the wilderness"; but indeed, until now you would not hear!

Shorter Catechism

- **Q. 43: What is the preface to the ten commandments?**

A: 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)

- **Q. 44: What doth the preface to the ten commandments teach us?**

A: A: 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. 1:15–18)

Why does the Preface Precede the Law?

- A sign of God's remarkable condescension to us.
- **Hosea 11** – ⁴ I drew them with gentle cords, with bands of love, and I was to them as those who take the yoke from their neck. I stooped *and* fed them.

Larger Catechism

- **Q. 101 - What is the preface to the ten commandments?**

A: The preface to the ten commandments is contained 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) Wherein God manifesteth his sovereignty, as being JEHOVAH, the eternal, immutable, and almighty God; (Isa. 44:6) having his being in and of himself, (Exod. 3:14) and giving being to all his words (Exod. 6:3) and works: (Acts 17:24,28) and that he is a God in covenant, as with Israel of old, so with all his people; (Gen. 17:7, Rom. 3:29) who, as he brought them out of their bondage in Egypt, so he delivereth us from our spiritual thralldom; (Luke 1:74–75) and that therefore we are bound to take him for our God alone, and to keep all his commandments. (1 Pet. 1:15,17–18, Lev. 18:30,19:37)

Components of the Preface

1. God's Sovereignty.
2. God's Covenant.
3. God's Works.
4. God's Deliverance.
5. Our Obligation.

God's Sovereignty

"I am the LORD..."

- The Preface establishes that God is Sovereign and has the authority to give commands.
- **Psalm 100** - ³ Know that the Lord, He *is* God; *It is* He *who* has made us, and not we ourselves; *We are* His people and the sheep of His pasture.
- **Matthew Henry** – "Because God *is the Lord*—Jehovah, self-existent, independent, eternal, and the fountain of all being and power; therefore he has an incontestable right to command us. He that gives being may give law; and therefore he is able to bear us out in our obedience, to reward it, and to punish our disobedience."

God's Covenant

"I am the LORD your God..."

- The Preface establishes that God is a God in Covenant with His People, and therefore they are bound to obey His Commandments.
- **Romans 2** - ¹⁷ Indeed you are called a Jew, and rest on the law, and make your boast in God, ¹⁸ and know *His* will, and approve the things that are excellent, being instructed out of the law, ¹⁹ and are confident that you yourself are a guide to the blind, a light to those who are in darkness, ²⁰ an instructor of the foolish, a teacher of babes, having the form of knowledge and truth in the law. ²¹ You, therefore, who teach another, do you not teach yourself? You who preach that a man should not steal, do you steal? ²² You who say, "Do not commit adultery," do you commit adultery? You who abhor idols, do you rob temples? ²³ You who make your boast in the law, do you dishonor God through breaking the law? ²⁴ For "*the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you,*" as it is written.¹

¹ *The New King James Version*. (1982). (Ro 2:17–24). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

- **Matthew Henry** – “He was their God, a God in covenant with them, their God by their own consent; and, if they would not keep his commandments, who would? He had laid himself under obligations to them by promise, and therefore might justly lay his obligations on them by precept. Though that covenant of peculiarity is now no more, yet there is another, by virtue of which all that are baptized are taken into relation to him as their God, and are therefore unjust, unfaithful, and very ungrateful, if they obey him not.”

God’s Works

“I am the LORD your God who brought you...”

- The Preface establishes that the work of redemption is God’s alone.
- **Ephesians 2** - ⁸ For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; *it is* the gift of God, ⁹ not of works, lest anyone should boast.
- **J.G Vos** – “We must understand that salvation comes first, and keeping God’s commandments come afterward. We cannot really even begin to keep God’s holy law until we have been redeemed from Satan’s kingdom, just as the people of Israel could not really keep God’s law until they were set free from Egyptian bondage. **We are not saved because of obedience; we are saved unto obedience.** Since Adam fell, redemption has been the basis of obedience. Also God’s work of redemption places upon us an added obligation to obey God’s law. All men are under obligation to obey God’s law, by reason of their relation to him as their Creator; but God’s own people are under an added obligation to obey, by reason of their relationship to him as their Redeemer.”

God’s Deliverance

“...who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage”

- The Preface establishes that God delivers His People from the bondage from which they cannot save themselves.
- **Exodus 6** - ⁹ So Moses spoke thus to the children of Israel; but they did not heed Moses, because of anguish of spirit and cruel bondage.
- **Calvin** – “Wherefore, they were no more their own masters, since God had purchased them unto Himself.”
- **Matthew Henry** - “He had *brought them out of the land of Egypt*; therefore they were bound in gratitude to obey him, because he had done them so great a kindness, had brought them out of a grievous slavery into a glorious liberty. They themselves had been eye-witnesses of the great things God had done in order to their deliverance, and could not but have observed that every circumstance of it heightened their obligation. They were now enjoying the blessed fruits of their deliverance, and in expectation of a speedy settlement in Canaan; and could they think any thing too much to do for him that had done so much for them? Nay, by redeeming them, he acquired a further right to rule them; they owed their service to him to whom they owed their freedom, and whose they were by purchase. And thus Christ, having rescued us out of the bondage of sin, is entitled to the best service we can do him, Lu. 1:74. Having loosed our bonds, he has bound us to obey him, Ps. 116:16”

Our Obligation

- Allegiance to God
 - **First Commandment** “You shall have no other gods before Me” (Exodus 20:3)
- Obedience to God
 - **1 Corinthians 6** - ²⁰ For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God’s.
 - **1 Peter 1** - ¹⁵ but as He who called you *is* holy, you also be holy in all *your* conduct, ¹⁶ because it is written, “*Be holy, for I am holy.*” ¹⁷ And if you call on the Father, who without partiality judges according to each one’s work, conduct yourselves throughout the time of your stay *here* in fear; ¹⁸ knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, *like* silver or gold, from your aimless conduct *received* by tradition from your fathers, ¹⁹ but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.

Conclusion

- The Prefaces teaches us that God’s Sovereignty, God’s Covenant, God’s Works, and God’s Deliverance in Jesus Christ inform us, and motivate us to obey the Ten Commandments.