

Loving Obedience

People speak of “deliverables” where I work: “things expected as agreed upon.” Ex: an engineering company in Mich was contracted to develop a software package for a portion of our equipment. Their “deliverables” consisted of a hit-list of items the software package was suppose to perform. **What are our “deliverables”?** **Now that the Lord has saved us, what is it that He expects from us?**

‘Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one! You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength. And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up.’ (Deut 6:4-7 NKJV)

‘The Lord did not set His love on you nor choose you because you were more in number than any other people, for you were the least of all peoples; but because the Lord loves you, and because He would keep the oath which He swore to your fathers, the Lord has brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you from the house of bondage, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt. Therefore know that the Lord your God, He is God, the faithful God who keeps covenant and mercy for a thousand generations with those who love Him and keep His commandments’ (Deut 7:7-9 NKJV)

‘And now, Israel, what does the Lord your God require of you, but to fear the Lord your God, to walk in all His ways and to love Him, to serve the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, and to keep the commandments of the Lord and His statutes which I command you today for your good?’ (Deut 10:12,13 NKJV)

‘Therefore you shall love the Lord your God, and keep His charge, His statutes, His judgments, and His commandments always... And it shall be that if you earnestly obey My commandments which I command you today, to love the Lord your God and serve Him with all your heart and with all your soul, then I will give you the rain for your land in its season, the early rain and the latter rain, that you may gather in your grain, your new wine, and your oil. And I will send grass in your fields for your livestock, that you may eat and be filled.... For if you carefully keep all these commandments which I command you to do — to love the Lord your God, to walk in all His ways, and to hold fast to Him — then the Lord will drive out all these nations from before you, and you will dispossess greater and mightier nations than yourselves.’ (Deut 11:1, 13-15, 22,23 NKJV)

‘If there arises among you a prophet or a dreamer of dreams, and he gives you a sign or a wonder, and the sign or the wonder comes to pass, of which he spoke to you, saying, Let us go after other gods — which you have not known — and let us serve them, you shall not listen to the words of that prophet or that dreamer of dreams, for the Lord your God is testing you to know whether you love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul. You shall walk after the Lord your God and fear Him, and keep His commandments and obey His voice; you shall serve Him and hold fast to Him.’ (Deut 13:1-4 NKJV)

‘Now if the Lord your God enlarges your territory, as He swore to your fathers, and gives you the land which He promised to give to your fathers, and if you keep all these commandments and do them, which I command you today, to love the Lord your God and to walk always in His ways, then you shall add three more cities for yourself besides these three’ (Deut 19:8,9 NKJV; instruction re: cities of refuge)

‘Now it shall come to pass, when all these things come upon you, the blessing and the curse which I have set before you, and you call them to mind among all the nations where the Lord your God drives you, and you return to the Lord your God and obey His voice, according to all that I command you today, you and your children, with all your heart and with all your soul, that the Lord your God will bring you back from captivity, and have compassion on you, and gather you again from all the nations where the Lord your God has scattered you.... And the Lord your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your descendants, to love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, that you may live.’ (Deut 30:1-3,6 NKJV)

‘See, I have set before you today life and good, death and evil, in that I command you today to love the Lord your God, to walk in His ways, and to keep His commandments, His statutes, and His judgments, that you may live and multiply; and the Lord your God will bless you in the land which you go to possess.... I call heaven and earth as witnesses today against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life, that both you and your descendants may live; that you may love the Lord your God, that you may obey His voice, and that you may cling to Him, for He is your life and the length of your days; and that you may dwell in the land which the Lord swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to give them.’ (Deut 30:15,16, 19,20 NKJV)

‘But take careful heed to do the commandment and the law which Moses the servant of the Lord commanded you, to love the Lord your God, to walk in all His ways, to keep His commandments, to hold fast to Him, and to serve Him with all your heart and with all your soul.’ (Josh 22:5 NKJV; remember to love / obey Lord now that God’s given them {Reuben, Gad, ½ Manasseh} the land)

'Keep justice, and do righteousness, for My salvation is about to come, and My righteousness to be revealed. Blessed is the man who does this, and the son of man who lays hold on it; who keeps from defiling the Sabbath, and keeps his hand from doing any evil.... Also the sons of the foreigner who join themselves to the Lord, to serve Him, and to love the name of the Lord, to be His servants — everyone who keeps from defiling the Sabbath, and holds fast My covenant — even them I will bring to My holy mountain, and make them joyful in My house of prayer. Their burnt offerings and their sacrifices will be accepted on My altar; for My house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations.' (Isa 56:1,2, 6,7 NKJV)

'And I prayed to the Lord my God, and made confession, and said, O Lord, great and awesome God, who keeps His covenant and mercy with those who love Him, and with those who keep His commandments, we have sinned and committed iniquity, we have done wickedly and rebelled, even by departing from Your precepts and Your judgments.' (Dan 9:4,5 NKJV)

'So it was, when I heard these words, that I sat down and wept, and mourned for many days; I was fasting and praying before the God of heaven. And I said: I pray, Lord God of heaven, O great and awesome God, You who keep Your covenant and mercy with those who love You and observe Your commandments, please let Your ear be attentive and Your eyes open, that You may hear the prayer of Your servant which I pray before You now, day and night, for the children of Israel Your servants, and confess the sins of the children of Israel which we have sinned against You. Both my father's house and I have sinned. We have acted very corruptly against You, and have not kept the commandments, the statutes, nor the ordinances which You commanded Your servant Moses. Remember, I pray, the word that You commanded Your servant Moses, saying, If you are unfaithful, I will scatter you among the nations; but if you return to Me, and keep My commandments and do them, though some of you were cast out to the farthest part of the heavens, yet I will gather them from there, and bring them to the place which I have chosen as a dwelling for My name.' (Neh 1:4-9 NKJV; Nehemiah remembers God's promise in prayer)

But what do we hear today?

Thankfully, that was all OT. The "deliverables" in the present NT age is quite different. Being the "age of grace", what God expects of us is to believe Jesus died for our sins and to confess that before church, usually by walking down an aisle and having your name read. If that is not possible, the name should at least be given as being saved while on visitation or the like. Baptism should follow. We should attend church after saved but the Lord understands if we do not.

Of course that is said with tongue-in-cheek, and perhaps some would accuse that description as being unfair and harsh. However that is the misunderstanding of many in our culture. What does Jesus teach?

'Then one of the scribes came, and having heard them reasoning together, perceiving that He had answered them well, asked Him, Which is the first commandment of all? Jesus answered him, The first of all the commandments is: Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength. This is the first commandment. And the second, like it, is this: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. There is no other commandment greater than these.' (Mark 12:28-31 NKJV)

Note a proper understanding of this is essential for salvation:

'So the scribe said to Him, Well said, Teacher. You have spoken the truth, for there is one God, and there is no other but He. And to love Him with all the heart, with all the understanding, with all the soul, and with all the strength, and to love one's neighbor as oneself, is more than all the whole burnt offerings and sacrifices. Now when Jesus saw that he answered wisely, He said to him, You are not far from the kingdom of God.' (Mark 12:32-34a NKJV)

In fact, Jesus states the entirety of the OT obligations rests upon these two commands:

'Teacher, which is the great commandment in the law? Jesus said to him, You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets.' (Matt 22:36-40 NKJV)

Whole-hearted devotion and obedience has always been the very essence of God's demands upon His people. — In preparing this lesson, I searched for the verbiage to provide evidence of this teaching back to Adam and could not find the exact words necessary. The concept may be seen however from the very beginning:

- Adam was commanded to obey the Lord (Gen 2:15-17). The relationship was more than a servant however; there was love, devotion and fellowship as evidenced by the Lord walking with Adam in the garden (Gen 3:8).
- Enoch walked with God in love and devotion till the Lord took him without dying. Amos however states two cannot walk together except they agree (Amos 3:3), therefore Enoch's life was undoubtedly one of obedience.
- Abraham is one of the great examples of obedience and held forth as such by James; yet in that very faith / works chapter, James also reminds us that Abraham was a friend of God (James 2:23).
- Israel began its existence with the verses previously read.

None could successfully argue that this principal does not apply as well to the angels; therefore it might be said ***obedience finding it's source in love is the manner of existence in the kingdom of God.***

Whole-hearted devotion and obedience are inseparable twins. — The Lord takes no satisfaction in pure servile obedience as from a slave under constriction. Nor is the Lord fooled by one saying he loves the Lord while living with no regard to His commands. **But love and obedience is inseparably bound — one cannot love the Lord without striving to obey Him, and one should not obey without loving Him.**



We must maintain a balance. No, although we love the Lord, we are never totally free from being self-willed. And yes, there are times we should obey just because it is something we should do, whether we *‘feel like it’* at the time or not. But on the whole, the proper Christian life should be a balance of serving the Lord because we want to, because we love Him.

This answers the question of the Lordship of Christ in salvation. — Several years ago John MacArthur stirred the issue in his book The Gospel According to Jesus in which he stated one may not be saved without accepting Jesus as Lord as well as Savior (it’s a sad commentary on our modern Christian culture that this was controversial).

‘If you love Me, keep My commandments.... He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me. And he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him.... He who does not love Me does not keep My words; and the word which you hear is not Mine but the Father’s who sent Me.’ (John 14:15, 21, 24 NKJV)

The plain teaching of scripture is there is no salvation without a life of obedience. — faith and disobedience is contrasted in Scripture:

‘He who believes [πιστεύων, pisteuōn, ‘to have faith, to believe’] in the Son has everlasting life; and he who does not believe [ἀπειθῶν, apeithōn, translated as ‘not obey’ in the RV, ASV, RSV, NASV, ESV] the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him.’ (John 3:36 NKJV; definitions for ‘does not obey’ — Friberg’s Lexicon: ‘(1) in relation to God *disobey, be disobedient*; (2) of the most severe form of disobedience, in relation to the gospel message *disbelieve, refuse to believe, be an unbeliever.*’ Thayer’s Lexicon: ‘*to not to allow oneself to be persuaded; not to comply with, to refuse or withhold belief (in Christ, in the gospel; opposed to [faith, belief].*’)

This is important to note: *the opposite of faith is not a passive unbelief but an active rebellion!*

This has been accepted by believers throughout church history: While this concept is denied by many in our modern American Christian culture, this teaching has *always* been accepted as the reality of the Christian life. As an example of the mentality amongst many of our churches today: several years ago I placed an excellent Christian quote on my Facebook page about the Christian living obediently and a good Christian friend (and I do believe he is a believer) replied back *‘to believe obedience is part of the Christian life is to make salvation based upon works.’* No amount of reasoning (*‘salvation is not based upon our obedience but salvation does bring forth obedience, etc.*) prevailed. This is a far too common mind-set in so many churches today.

- “Wherefore none of the devices of the devil shall be hidden from you, if, like Paul, ye perfectly possess that faith and love towards Christ which are the beginning and the end of life. **The beginning of life is faith, and the end is love. And these two being inseparably connected together, do perfect the man of God; while all other things which are requisite to a holy life follow after them. No man making a profession of faith ought to sin, nor one possessed of love to hate his brother. For He that said, ‘Thou shalt love the Lord thy God,’ said also, ‘and thy neighbor as thyself.’ Those that profess themselves to be Christ’s are known not only by what they say, but by what they practice. ‘For the tree is known by its fruit.’”** [the Epistle of Ignatius to the Ephesians; AD 30-107]

- **“If any one desires to travel to the appointed place, he must be zealous in his works. The knowledge, therefore, which is given to us for the purpose of walking in this way, is the following. Thou shalt love Him that created thee: thou shalt glorify Him that redeemed thee from death. Thou shalt be simple in heart, and rich in spirit. Thou shalt not join thyself to those who walk in the way of death. Thou shalt hate doing what is displeasing to God: thou shalt hate all hypocrisy. Thou shalt not forsake the commandments of the Lord. Thou shalt not exalt thyself, but shalt be of a lowly mind.** Thou shalt not take glory to thyself. Thou shalt not take evil counsel against thy neighbor. Thou shalt not allow over-boldness to enter into thy soul. Thou shalt not commit fornication: thou shalt not commit adultery: thou shalt not be a corrupter of youth. Thou shalt not let the word of God issue from thy lips with any kind of impurity. Thou shalt not accept persons when thou reprovest any one for transgression. Thou shalt be meek: thou shalt be peaceable. Thou shalt tremble at the words which thou hearest. Thou shalt not be mindful of evil against thy brother. Thou shalt not be of doubtful mind as to whether a thing shall be or not. Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord in vain. Thou shalt love thy neighbor more than thine own soul. **Thou shalt not slay the child by procuring abortion; nor, again, shalt thou destroy it after it is born.** Thou shalt not withdraw thy hand from thy son, or from thy daughter, but from their infancy thou shalt teach them the fear of the Lord. Thou shalt not covet what is thy neighbor’s, nor shalt thou be avaricious. Thou shalt not be joined in soul with the haughty, but thou shalt be reckoned with the

righteous and lowly. Receive thou as good things the trials which come upon thee. Thou shalt not be of double mind or of double tongue, for a double tongue is a snare of death. Thou shalt be subject to the Lord, and to other masters as the image of God, with modesty and fear. Thou shalt not issue orders with bitterness to thy maidservant or thy man-servant, who trust in the same God, lest thou shouldst not reverence that God who is above both; for He came to call men not according to their outward appearance, but according as the Spirit had prepared them. Thou shalt communicate in all things with thy neighbor; thou shalt not call things thine own; for if ye are partakers in common of things which are incorruptible, how much more should you be of those things which are corruptible! Thou shalt not be hasty with thy tongue, for the mouth is a snare of death. As far as possible, thou shalt be pure in thy soul. Do not be ready to stretch forth thy hands to take, whilst thou contractest them to give. Thou shalt love, as the apple of thine eye, every one that speaketh to thee the word of the Lord. Thou shalt remember the day of judgment, night and day. Thou shalt seek out every day the faces of the saints, either by word examining them, and going to exhort them, and meditating how to save a soul by the word, or by thy hands thou shalt labor for the redemption of thy sins. Thou shalt not hesitate to give, nor murmur when thou givest. "Give to every one that asketh thee," and thou shalt know who is the good Recompenser of the reward. Thou shalt preserve what thou hast received in charge, neither adding to it nor taking from it. To the last thou shalt hate the wicked one. Thou shalt judge righteously. Thou shalt not make a schism, but thou shalt pacify those that contend by bringing them together. Thou shalt confess thy sins. Thou shalt not go to prayer with an evil conscience. This is the way of light." [*the Epistle of Barnabas*; AD 100]

- "For God sets before every race of mankind that which is always and universally just, as well as all righteousness; and every race knows that adultery, and fornication, and homicide, and such like, are sinful; and though they all commit such practices, yet they do not escape from the knowledge that they act unrighteously whenever they so do, with the exception of those who are possessed with an unclean spirit, and who have been debased by education, by wicked customs, and by sinful institutions, and who have lost, or rather quenched and put under, their natural ideas. For we may see that such persons are unwilling to submit to the same things which they inflict upon others, and reproach each other with hostile consciences for the acts which they perpetrate. **And hence I think that our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ spoke well when He summed up all righteousness and piety in two commandments. They are these: 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy strength, and thy neighbor as thyself.'** For the man who loves God with all the heart, and with all the strength, being filled with a God-fearing mind, will reverence no other God; and since God wishes it, he would reverence that angel [messenger] who is beloved by the same Lord and God. And the man who loves his neighbor as himself will wish for him the same good things that he wishes for himself, and no man will wish evil things for himself. Accordingly, he who loves his neighbor would pray and labor that his neighbor may be possessed of the same benefits as himself. Now nothing else is neighbor to man than that similarly-affectioned and reasonable being - man. Therefore, since all righteousness is divided into two branches, namely, in so far as it regards God and men, whoever, says the Scripture, loves the Lord God with all the heart, and all the strength, and his neighbor as himself, would be truly a righteous man. But you were never shown to be possessed of friendship or love either towards God, or towards the prophets, or towards yourselves, but, as is evident, you are ever found to be idolaters and murderers of righteous men, so that you laid hands even on Christ Himself; and to this very day you abide in your wickedness, execrating those who prove that this man who was crucified by you is the Christ. Nay, more than this, you suppose that He was crucified as hostile to and cursed by God, which supposition is the product of your most irrational mind. For though you have the means of understanding that this man is Christ from the signs given by Moses, yet you will not; but, in addition, fancying that we can have no arguments, you put whatever question comes into your minds, while you yourselves are at a loss for arguments whenever you meet with some firmly established Christian." [*Dialogue of Justin Martyr with Trypho, a Jew*; AD 110-165]

- "It clearly appears that there was but one Author of both the Old and the New law, from the fact that Christ condemned traditions and customs repugnant to the former, while He confirmed its most important precepts, and taught that He was Himself the end of the Mosaic Law. (1) For the tradition of the elders themselves, which they pretended to observe from the law, was contrary to the law given by Moses. Wherefore also Esaias declares: 'Thy dealers mix the wine with water,' showing that the elders were in the habit of mingling a watered tradition with the simple command of God; that is, they set up a spurious law, and one contrary to the true law; as also the Lord made plain, when He said to them, 'Why do ye transgress the commandment of God, for the sake of your tradition?' For not only by actual transgression did they set the law of God at nought, mingling the wine with water; but they also set up their own law in opposition to it, which is termed, even to the present day, the pharisaical. In this law they suppress certain things, add others, and interpret others, again, as they think proper, which their teachers use, each one in particular; and desiring to uphold these traditions, they were unwilling to be subject to the law of God, which prepares them for the coming of Christ. But they did even blame the Lord for healing on the Sabbath-days, which, as I have already observed, the law did not prohibit. For they did themselves, in one sense, perform acts of healing upon the Sabbath-day, when they circumcised a man on that day; but they did not blame themselves for **transgressing the command of God through tradition and the aforesaid pharisaical law, and for not keeping the commandment of the law, which is the love of God.** (2) **But that this is the first and greatest commandment, and that the next has respect to love towards our neighbor, the Lord has taught, when He says that the entire law and the prophets hang upon these two commandments. Moreover, He did not Himself bring down from heaven any other commandment greater than this one, but renewed this very same one to His disciples, when He enjoined them to love God with all their heart, and others as themselves.** But if He had descended from another Father, He never would have made use of the first and greatest commandment of the law; but He would undoubtedly have endeavored by all means to bring down a greater one

than this from the perfect Father, so as not to make use of that which had been given by the God of the law. And Paul in like manner declares, 'Love is the fulfilling of the law:' and he declares that when all other things have been destroyed, there shall remain 'faith, hope, and love; but the greatest of all is love;' and that apart from the love of God, neither knowledge avails anything, nor the understanding of mysteries, nor faith, nor prophecy, but that without love all are hollow and vain; moreover, that love makes man perfect; and that he who loves God is perfect, both in this world and in that which is to come. ***For we do never cease from loving God; but in proportion as we continue to contemplate Him, so much the more do we love Him.*** (3) As in the law, therefore, and in the Gospel likewise, the first and greatest commandment is, to love the Lord God with the whole heart, and then there follows a commandment like to it, to love one's neighbor as one's self; the author of the law and the Gospel is shown to be one and the same. For the precepts of an absolutely perfect life, since they are the same in each Testament, have pointed out to us the same God, who certainly has promulgated particular laws adapted for each; but the more prominent and the greatest commandments, without which salvation cannot be attained, He has exhorted us to observe the same in both." [Irenaeus Against Heresies; AD 120-202]

- ***"You will say, then, to me, 'Is God angry?' Yes; He is angry with those who act wickedly, but He is good, and kind, and merciful, to those who love and fear Him; for He is a chastener of the godly, and Father of the righteous; but He is a judge and punisher of the impious."*** [from Theophilus of Antioch; AD 115-168]

- ***"EXHORTATION TO THE HEATHEN: Let the light then shine in the hidden part of man, that is, the heart; and let the beams of knowledge arise to reveal and irradiate the hidden inner man, the disciple of the Light, the familiar friend and fellow-heir of Christ; especially now that we have come to know the most precious and venerable name of the good Father, who to a pious and good child gives gentle counsels, and commands what is salutary for His child. He who obeys Him has the advantage in all things, follows God, obeys the Father, knows Him through wandering, loves God, loves his neighbor, fulfills the commandment, seeks the prize, claims the promise. But it has been God's fixed and constant purpose to save the flock of men: for this end the good God sent the good Shepherd. And the Word, having unfolded the truth, showed to men the height of salvation, that either repenting they might be saved, or refusing to obey, they might be judged. This is the proclamation of righteousness: to those that obey, glad tidings; to those that disobey, judgment."*** [from Clement of Alexandria; AD 153-217]

- ***"AN ANSWER TO THE JEWS: He gave to all nations the selfsame law, which at definite and stated times He enjoined should be observed, when He willed, and through whom He willed, and as He willed. For in the beginning of the world He gave to Adam himself and Eve a law, that they were not to eat of the fruit of the tree planted in the midst of paradise; but that, if they did contrariwise, by death they were to die. Which law had continued enough for them, had it been kept. For in this law given to Adam we recognize in embryo all the precepts which afterwards sprouted forth when given through Moses; that is, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God from thy whole heart and out of thy whole soul; Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself; Thou shalt not kill; Thou shalt not commit adultery; Thou shalt not steal; False witness thou shalt not utter; Honor thy father and mother; and, That which is another's, shalt thou not covet. For the primordial law was given to Adam and Eve in paradise, as the womb of all the precepts of God. In short, if they had loved the Lord their God, they would not have contravened His precept.*** [from Tertullian; AD 145-220]

- ***"Most properly does God, instead of worship or honor, require love from us, because in this way He declares that no other worship is pleasing to Him than what is voluntary; for no man will actually obey God but he who loves Him.... Let us learn, that the commencement of godliness is the love of God, because God disdains the forced services of men, and chooses to be worshiped freely and willingly; and let us also learn, that under the love of God is included the reverence due to him.... God does not rest satisfied with the outward appearance of works, but chiefly demands the inward feelings, that from a good root good fruits may grow."*** [John Calvin, Harmony of the Gospels]

- ***THE HEIDELBERG CATECHISM, 1563: Question 1. What is thy only comfort in life and death? Answer. That I with body and soul, both in life and death, am not my own, but belong unto my faithful Savior Jesus Christ; who, with his precious blood, hath fully satisfied for all my sins, and delivered me from all the power of the devil; and so preserves me that without the will of my heavenly Father, not a hair can fall from my head; yea, that all things must be subservient to my salvation, and therefore, by his Holy Spirit, he also assures me of eternal life, and makes me sincerely willing and ready, henceforth, to live unto him. — Question 4. What doth the law of God require of us? Answer. Christ teaches us that briefly, Matthew 22:37-40, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength. This is the first and the great commandment; and the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets." — Question 5. Canst thou keep all these things perfectly? Answer. In no wise; for I am prone by nature to hate God and my neighbor. — Question 63. Do not our good works merit, which yet God will reward in this and in the future life? Answer. This reward is not of merit but of grace. — Question 64. But doth not this doctrine make men careless and profane? Answer. By no means: for it is impossible that those, who are implanted into Christ by a true faith, should not bring forth fruits of thankfulness.***

- ***THE WESTMINSTER CONFESSION OF FAITH, 1646: (1) Good works are only such as God has commanded in His holy Word, and not such as, without the warrant thereof, are devised by men, out of blind zeal, or upon any pretense of good intention. (2) These good works, done in obedience to God's commandments, are the fruits and evidences of a true and lively faith: and by them believers manifest their thankfulness, strengthen their assurance, edify their brethren, adorn the***

profession of the Gospel, stop the mouths of the adversaries, and glorify God, whose workmanship they are, created in Christ Jesus thereunto, that, having their fruit unto holiness, they may have the end, eternal life. (3) *Their ability to do good works is not at all of themselves, but wholly from the Spirit of Christ.* And that they may be enabled thereunto, beside the graces they have already received, there is required an actual influence of the same Holy Spirit, to work in them to will, and to do, of His good pleasure: yet are they not hereupon to grow negligent, as if they were not bound to perform any duty unless upon a special motion of the Spirit; but they ought to be diligent in stirring up the grace of God that is in them. (4) They who, in their obedience, attain to the greatest height which is possible in this life, are so far from being able to supererogate, and to do more than God requires, as that *they fall short of much which in duty they are bound to do.* (5) *We cannot by our best works merit pardon of sin, or eternal life at the hand of God,* by reason of the great disproportion that is between them and the glory to come; and the infinite distance that is between us and God, whom, by them, we can neither profit, nor satisfy for the debt of our former sins, but when we have done all we can, we have done but our duty, and are unprofitable servants: and because, as they are good, they proceed from His Spirit, and as they are wrought by us, they are defiled, and mixed with so much weakness and imperfection, that they cannot endure the severity of God's judgment. (6) *Notwithstanding, the persons of believers being accepted through Christ, their good works also are accepted in Him; not as though they were in this life wholly unblamable and unreproveable in God's sight; but that He, looking upon them in His Son, is pleased to accept and reward that which is sincere, although accompanied with many weaknesses and imperfections.* (7) Works done by unregenerate men, although for the matter of them they may be things which God commands; and of good use both to themselves and others: yet, because they proceed not from an heart purified by faith; nor are done in a right manner, according to the Word; nor to a right end, the glory of God, they are therefore sinful and cannot please God, or make a man meet to receive grace from God: and yet, their neglect of them is more sinful and displeasing unto God.

- THE WESTMINSTER SHORTER CATECHISM: *Question 1: What is the chief end of man? Answer 1: Man's chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy Him for ever.* — Question 2: What rule hath God given to direct us how we may glorify and enjoy Him? Answer 2: The Word of God, which is contained in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, is the only rule to direct us how we may glorify and enjoy Him. — Question 39. What is the duty which God requireth of man? Answer 39. The duty which God requireth of man is obedience to His revealed will. — Question 40. What did God at first reveal to man for the rule of his obedience? Answer 40. The rule which God at first revealed to man for his obedience, was the Moral Law. — Question 41. Where is the Moral Law summarily comprehended? — Answer 41. The Moral Law is summarily comprehended in the Ten Commandments. — *Question 42. What is the sum of the Ten Commandments? Answer 42. The sum of the Ten Commandments is, "to love the Lord our God" with all our heart, all our soul, with all our strength, and with all our mind; and our neighbor as ourselves.*

The love demanded from believers is an act of the will. — Note this is a *command*, not something the Lord *wishes* to see in His people. Love therefore cannot be merely the emotional sentimental "mush" of the world since emotions do not respond to commands. Rather *love is a rational decision which responds in obedience, possibly in spite of our emotions.*

There is no exception to this command due to age limitations. — This is not something limited to adults and children are excused, nor are the elderly exempt due to their age. Cp: Dunkards' belief in allowing the children to "sow their wild oats" since the Lord promises to bring them back.

This is not a command which we either obey or we do not obey; rather it is a matter of degrees. — Since this is essential to salvation, no one saved ignores this command totally. Nor is there any believer who would be brash enough to state they fully live this command. But do we embrace the lie that "*since this is impossible to fully obey, why worry?*" — that is an excuse for disobedience. *The Lord desires our love and obedience to grow:* if we pray 5 minutes, the Lord desires 10 minutes. If we pray 10 minutes, the Lord desires 15 minutes. If we study our bibles 3 hours a week, the Lord desires 4 hours. If we study 4 hours, the Lord desires 5 hours. *This is not a matter of the Lord "moving the goal", rather it is a matter of the Lord continually showing us more of ourselves He wants us to surrender.*

Two practical responses to this teaching:

- One should obviously be to examine our lives for areas of failures. *In the light of the most important command Christ could give us, what are our excuses for refusing to obey?*
- *Note the emphasis the Lord puts on our balanced devotion (love / obedience). Some have said "we are saved to serve." It would be more accurate to state "we are saved to love the Lord, the natural outgrowth of which is service."* When we serve the Lord, is the motive one of love? How about our prayers? I know with families it is extremely difficult to be alone with the Lord. Prayer with our children / parents are good, prayers with our spouses are proper, public prayers in church are commanded; but when was the last time we were really alone and intimate with the Lord? Is our prayers open and honest? Do we expose our hidden selves to the Lord or do we hide thoughts which we know to be sinful, feelings which we think no others feel, fears which we deny? *Our closest, most intimate friend should be the Lord. (I feel sorry for professed believers to whom Christianity is a list of "dos and don'ts". Christianity is a loving relationship with our God, the outcome of which is our desire to obey and please Him!)*