

Heidelberg Catechism 4-5 – How Far You Fall short

Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ: Suppose you got nothing from your girlfriend or boyfriend for Valentine's Day...not even a greeting or a card. Wouldn't that have disappointed you? Now, suppose you were engaged to be married to someone, and just days before the wedding, they said that they found someone new that they love better and they wanted to break off the wedding plans. Wouldn't that have disappointed you more than if your boyfriend or girlfriend forgot to get you something for Valentine's Day? Now one more - suppose you married someone, you dedicated your whole life to him and then you found out that he left you and moved in with another woman and did not tell you. Wouldn't that have disappointed you even more than the Valentine disappointment or the broken engagement? Surely so! Even as a sinner yourself you would be disappointed. Now multiply that worst type of disappointment millions of times over and that is how a perfectly holy God felt when he gave man everything – a perfect life, a perfect wife, a perfect promise, a perfect law, a perfect garden-everything in perfection...when man sinned. God had a perfect expectation from man and many totally failed. That is what God wants to remind you of today.

Our headings are: A High Degree of Expectation, and A High Degree of Failure.

Our goals are: That you will see how great and how deep man's fall was so that you can love Christ more and serve him better for raising you out of that mire泥沼 and establishing you on the Rock.

A High Degree of Expectation

4 Q. WHAT DOES GOD'S LAW REQUIRE OF US? A. Christ teaches us this in summary in Matthew 22– You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it, You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments depend all the law and the prophets.

1. When God created man God demanded that all people (men, women, boys and girls) love him and their neighbors with perfect love. Love was the norm. Man expressed his love for God by his obedience. They showed love in their thoughts, their words, and their actions. Adam and Eve knew that love (shown by obedience) should have been the norm of their lives. When they sinned, God directly accused them of disobedience (So they knew God's law.) (What a contrast this is from today where you are trained to say: If you love me, you will let me do what I want and not punish me. You will give me my space.) God commanded with a clear command: You break my command and fail to love me, you die – your soul will be eternally separated from me.

2. You would realize that God did not direct you (or Adam) to love yourself. Neither does Jesus demand that you love yourself in Matthew 22. He demanded that you love others. Knowing how much man loves himself, God used it as a standard of how much you must love God. God was not endorsing self-love, he was pointing out how much you love yourself. Let me illustrate. Someone says: "Love vegetables as much as you love pork fat." This wasn't saying that loving pork fat was good. It simply acknowledges that you love pork fat – which may be bad for you. Similarly, self-love is sin. True love is self-sacrifice for the good of others.

3. God did not make it a suggestion to love. He demanded it and expected proof of love.

4. This clear command to obey all of God's law continued later as well...even after the Fall. Moses: Deuteronomy 5:32 "Therefore you shall be careful to do as the LORD your God has commanded you; you shall not turn aside to the right hand or to the left.

5. God also stated the quality of that love. God demanded perfect love from those who were perfectly made and perfectly equipped with all things to love. Love can only be perfect if it is from your whole heart, with your whole soul, with your whole mind, and with your whole strength. This is the only way you can love exhaustively...at every opportunity and in perfection...as God demands. This is what Jesus directly demanded and this is what he demanded through Moses.

Deuteronomy 6: 5 "You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength.

Leviticus 19: 18 'You shall not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the children of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the LORD.

6. Why did God make such strong demands? God's holiness caused him to demand perfect love...

which is perfect holiness...Man was made in the image of God and man must reflect God's holiness. This is a communicable attribute...an attribute of God that he can give to you.

7. This love that God requires of you is based on his law. Look at Matthew 22. Notice the context:

Jesus was responding to the question about which was the greatest law – the most important law. Jesus simply said that love was the most important law. To love God is to keep Laws 1-4. To love your neighbor, you have keep Laws 5-10. Love and law are joined at the hip. Everything that that the Old Testament taught was about loving God (Law 1-4) and loving one's neighbor, and how one could get credit for loving God and loving one's neighbor. So love is not what you generally see in Soap Operas...or romantic novels... Love is not an emotion. It is a duty. Love is faithful obedience to Christ's commands. "If you love me you will obey my commands." Christ.

8. Now since love is the norm of the law (like water is the norm of a fish), if you want to obey the law, love is your ground for obeying it. To not have love is like being a fish out of water. Love was the ground for keeping God's law in Canaan, and is the ground for you keeping God's law today.

A High Degree of Failure

5 Q. CAN YOU LIVE UP TO ALL THIS PERFECTLY? A. No. I have a natural tendency to hate God and my neighbor.

1. Because God not only demands that you keep his laws, but God also demands that you keep his laws perfectly and exhaustively, no man is able to do it. In the beginning, Adam and Eve were able to do this...but not anymore. Of course, the reason man is not able to keep the law is because of sin.

Romans 3: 9 What then? Are we better than they? Not at all. For we have previously charged both Jews and Greeks that they are all under sin. 10 As it is written: "There is none righteous, no, not one; 11 There is none who understands; There is none who seeks after God. 12 They have all turned aside; They have together become unprofitable; There is none who does good, no, not one." 19 Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. 23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,

1John 1:8 If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.

10 If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us.

2. The trouble is why do you not love like you should? It is against you nature to love. It is when you hate, that you are doing what is natural. You don't have to train a child to do sinful things. He naturally does them. That is because it is in his nature. A child is not born as a new white piece of paper. And it is not society that brings about his first sins (though society does contribute to his sinfulness in many ways later). When a baby learns to sin it is because he simply acting out his nature. This is not a nice picture to use for a baby, but unless the baby and you acknowledge you sinfulness, you cannot expect to be saved from your sins. You are sworn enemies of God.

Romans 8: 7 Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be.

3. Does the Bible really point to a picture of such dire gloom about all men and even include these sweet little babies our sisters will soon have? Absolutely. Man's norm became hate instead of love. Hate moves to violence and murder.

Genesis 6: 5 Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.

Consider the hate of the homosexual agenda...they want to force you to accept their wicked 邪恶 lifestyles (like trying to force ministers to marry them) and will destroy your business if you don't kowtow to their demands (like taking you to human rights commissions). Hatred from feminists causes them to want to destroy the child in the womb. The hatred of the racist causes him to kill those who are different from the way he is. Hatred for God and love for money cause the some to want squeeze his employees – underpaying them. Hate of Christians caused Quebec to force

children to learn anti-Christian ethics in school. And all this starts from the heart.

Jeremiah 17:9 "The heart is deceitful above all things, And desperately wicked; Who can know it? It is relatively easy to judge the words of the mouth and the actions of the hands. You cannot judge the heart but God certainly can... Yet there is hope. God taught man how desperate man was. He even taught man the condition of his heart so man would not live a life of hypocrisy. God exposes sins so that man might repent.

4. Some don't like this doctrine. Those who despise this doctrine, do so on the basis that they want to make God in their own image. In other words, they want God to conform to what they are and believe... God must agree with their assessment of things. So these despisers of this doctrine then repackage God to be a relativists when it comes to holiness. They want God to say: "Do the best that you can and I will accept that." They teach this to their congregations and students. God demands perfection. Consider again God's words regarding man's thoughts and man actions: Leviticus 19:17'You shall not hate your brother in your heart. You shall surely rebuke your neighbor, and not bear sin because of him. 18 'You shall not take vengeance...

5. This sense of your sinfulness does not go away when you become a Christian. In fact, your sense of your sins is enhanced. You acknowledge your full sinfulness. The godly Apostle Paul wrote: Romans 7:23 But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. 24 O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?

But through Christ you can love as you ought to. Praise God for that.

1John 4:19 We love because he first loved us. 20 If someone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen? 21 And this commandment we have from Him: that he who loves God must love his brother also.

Conclusion:

God set high demands...the highest demands of holiness and he perfectly equipped man with everything he needed to meet those perfectly holy demands. But man failed. Man miserably failed and brought down all this descendants after him to this miserable pit. How disappointed this was to God! And how it made God angry! He wanted man to pass the test, but man failed to live up to God's ideals. So man robbed himself of being confirmed in holiness (no possibility of falling from sin) by failing that test. Now man, without being restored, is making a trek 行进 toward his own destruction...everything in his life is moving toward death. You see this is sickness, wars, and crimes...and he has no hope! The only hope man has, which is no hope at all, is that there is nothing – no hell and no judgment- after death...

Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ: That first man, Adam, miserable failed alongside his wife, but the 2nd Adam never failed. He perfectly obeyed God's law so you would be credited with his perfect obedience. And he was perfectly sacrificed for you so you receive that perfect holiness that God demands. Romans 8:1: "There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit." God's justice demanded the cross: Christ did not escape. He is the means by which you escape. Because you fully understand the hopelessness of your fallen condition, you get the sense now of how much you should worship and work for the 2nd Adam. He expects his children to worship and work for him. This is what the Psalmist did: Psalm 101:1-2 I will sing of your love and justice; to you, O LORD, I will sing praise. I will be careful to lead a blameless life— when will you come to me? I will walk in my house with blameless heart.

Finally, if you are carrying your sins on your own head, it will crush you and send you to hell. Before it does, why not call out to the Lord Jesus to take away your sins...and free you so you can live and love as a child of Christ?