

03 - 1st Commandment - Exodus 20:3 - 2014-02-09

Exodus 20:3 "You shall have no other gods before Me."

Call to Worship: Psalm 96:2-5

Scripture Reading: Matthew 4:1-11

Sermon: "The First Commandment" Exodus 20:3

Benediction: Joshua 24:15-16

INTRODUCTION

Brothers and sisters who are my fellow believers in Christ, you are about to hear a reading of the first commandment from the Ten Commandments, God's moral law, spoken by God Himself, written in stone by God Himself. Before you hear it, consider some points of truth to guide you through the experience.

-Your standing with God---your status of being reconciled to Him, of being acceptable to Him, of being judged righteous or not guilty in His courtroom, of being loved by Him, of being adopted as His son---your standing with God is by His grace through faith in Jesus Christ, and so does not depend on your keeping of this holy law. The law of God was never intended to be a way for you to earn salvation. By the works of the law no one is justified in God's sight.

-Everyone who tries to keep the law, the commandments of God, as a way of being in right standing with God, will, instead of being blessed by God, be cursed, because he has not kept the law and cannot keep the law.

-As to salvation, the Lord Jesus Christ has done all your law-keeping for you. He is Jesus Christ the righteous. You are considered a law-keeper not by keeping the law yourself, but by trusting, believing, having faith in the Lord Jesus, who has kept the law on your behalf.

-The Lord Jesus Christ also has redeemed you from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for you, as He hung on the cross, so that you may receive all the blessings promised to the righteous through faith in Him.

-So, as you hear the law read and expounded, it may well overwhelm your conscience, when you see the blackness of your own sin against the whiteness of God's perfect law. As I sometimes have felt in studying the law, you may find yourself turned inside out by God's law, your inmost being exposed to the bright light of God's commandments.

-If you trust in Jesus Christ, let this intense awareness of your own sinfulness produce a fresh expression of love and thankfulness to the Savior who has loved you and saved you with His own blood.

-Then understand that even though you cannot keep this law to earn salvation, and even though you cannot, in this life, keep this law perfectly, you are commanded to keep it, to obey it. In giving you a new birth, making you a new creature, God has made a fresh writing of this law on your heart, in your conscience, so that you love His law and do not see it as a heavy burden. It is His work in you, by the Holy Spirit, to cause you to keep

this law.

-This law of God in these commandments is the very substance of love. In these commandments you are told what it is to love God and to love your neighbor. So, if you would love the God who has saved you, and would love the people God has made in His image, then hear these commands and obey them in love.

Those of you who are not trusting in Jesus Christ, your hearing of God's commandment today will be quite different. As you hear the commandment read, and as you hear me expound the commandment, explaining to you how deeply the commandment reaches into your soul, how thoroughly the commandment judges every thought of your mind and affection of your heart, you are hearing an accusation made against you.

The accusation reads like this

- you only have to hear this first line of God's law to see that you have broken the law of the God who made you and who rules over you
- you have not broken it a little bit, but you have broken all of it
- you were a rebel with your whole race in Adam when you ate the forbidden fruit;
- your very nature is black, dirty, putrid, rotten, and stinking.
- all your thoughts, feelings, words, and actions are so corrupt compared with God's perfection that the very best things you do are like dirty rags to Him
- if you stay like you are now, you have no hope; there surely will come the judgment day, and you will be found guilty of all your law-breaking; you will be thrown into the lake of fire prepared for the devil and his angels, to be tormented in the flames of God's wrath for ever and ever without end
- therefore, as you hear this commandment of God's law, repent! Flee from the wrath to come; run away from the flames of hell; fall down at the feet of the Lord Jesus Christ; trust no longer to anything or anyone else, least of all to your own goodness; but believe in Jesus to save you; become his follower, his disciple.

So, believer and unbeliever, hear the commandment of God and give glory to God in Jesus Christ.

SERMON

Read the text: Exodus 20:1-3

Exodus 20:1-3 And God spake all these words, saying, (2) I am the LORD thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. (3) Thou shalt have no other gods before me.

An important point of understanding on the wording here

-“You” or “Thou” is in the singular

-the whole nation of Israel was standing there

-the whole race of man is addressed

-the whole church is here together

-yet God put this commandment to you, just you

-“Before me” does not mean “ahead of me” as if it were okay with God for you to have other gods as long as he is your first or best god. No, it means before me the way food is before you on the table.

I. The Sin Specifically Forbidden by the First Commandment

To worship anything else as if it were a god; worshiping that instead of God or with God

A. False gods such as Rah, Baal, or Zeus/Jupiter

B. Satan or demons

C. Concepts of God that are called “God” or even “Jehovah” or “Jesus” but are not

1. God of the Jews

2. Allah of the Muslims

3. Jesus of the cults

II. The Other Sins of that Same Kind Also Forbidden by the First Commandment

Remember this principle for understanding the Ten Commandments: each commandment is the head of a category; the most heinous example of that kind of sin is mentioned to represent all sins in that category; so, although actually worshiping something else as God is the most heinous sin of this kind, all other sins of this kind are also forbidden

Sins of this kind, sins in this category, are those in which we give to someone else or something else the trust and affection we should have for God alone;

Shorter Catechism: the first commandment forbids the denying or not worshiping and glorifying the true God as God, and our God; and the giving of that worship and glory to any other, which is due to him alone.

A. Having faith in your own understanding instead of in what God has revealed to us

1. Denying that there is a god at all - atheism

2. Believing that man cannot know whether there is a god - agnosticism

3. Saying that all religions are just different ways to god, that we all worship the same god - pluralism

4. Ascribing God’s work of creation to natural processes

5. Denying the truth of the bible

6. Teaching aberrant concepts of God’s being

a. that God is a creature, a son of some older or higher god

b. that Jesus Christ is not one person with both the divine nature and a real human nature

c. that the Holy Spirit is not a distinct person, but just a force

- d. denying that God is one God in three persons, a Tri-Unity or Trinity
- 7. Seeking to be justified in God's sight in some other way than through faith in Jesus Christ
- 8. Complaining about His providence; thinking that God was wrong in bringing upon you what He has brought
- B. Treating people as if they were God
 - 1. Loving people more than God
 - a. your husband or wife
 - b. your children or grandchildren
 - 2. Fearing men more than your fear God
 - 3. Desiring to please men more than you desire to please God
 - 4. Thinking that you have to obey commandments of men that are not necessary according to the bible, or that are contrary to the bible
- C. Finding your joy in this world instead of in God
 - 1. Loving the things of this world; living for the things of this world; being friends with this world;
 - there is no doubt we are in this world;
 - but the Lord commands that we be in it, but not of it; this commandment forbids our being of the world
- D. Praying to your fellow creatures instead of praying exclusively to God
 - 1. dead ancestors
 - 2. dead religious figures, such as Buddha
 - 3. angels
 - 4. saints
- E. Trusting in your own strength rather than in God's strength
 - 1. boasting about all you have, as if you gained it by your own strength
 - 2. boasting about what you have done, as if you did it in your own strength
 - 3. boasting about what you will do, as if you will do it with your own strength
 - 4. using unlawful means to accomplish a good end
 - 5. using lawful means to accomplish a good end, then trusting in those means rather than in God
- F. Giving too high a place to money and the things money can buy
 - 1. living to get money and things, as if your money were your god
 - 2. being greedy for more and more of what you don't have; being stingy toward the poor with what you do have
 - 3. worrying where your money will come from; being anxious about what you will eat or drink or wear; giving too much thought about tomorrow rather than trusting God to provide your daily bread

All such things, where in your thoughts, in your attitudes, in your words, and in your actions, you give to something else some of the trust, the love, the devotion, the allegiance that you should have for God alone, all such things are forbidden by the first commandment.

III. The Duties Required by the First Commandment

*Remember this principle for understanding the Ten Commandments: when a sin is forbidden, the opposite virtue is required.

*Of course the main thing required is love toward God! But that is required by every commandment and all the commandments. The purpose of the commandments is to be more specific about what makes up that love.

So, the first commandment, "Thou shalt have no other gods before Me" commands you to be devoted to God in everything to the highest degree, rendering unto Him everything that you owe to Him;

Shorter Catechism: to know and acknowledge God to be the only true God, and our God; and to worship and glorify Him accordingly.

- A. to desire God's approval more than man's approval
- B. to fear God rather than fearing men and what they can do to you
- C. to rejoice in the Lord rather than in the world
- D. to set your mind on Christ in heaven rather than the things of this world
- E. to love God's law and meditate on it day and night
- F. to worship God with your whole life, offering your whole body as a living sacrifice
- G. to worship God in the assembly of the church
- H. to consider the world around you and give glory to God as its Creator
- I. to use material possessions not for over-indulgence of the flesh, but for the glory of God
- J. to turn away from your sins to serve the living God
- K. to trust in Jesus Christ, the Son of God
- L. to pray to God, according to His will
- M. to thank God for all His benefits
- N. to walk before Him humbly

IV. The Exposure of Your Disobedience to the First Commandment (Hebrews 4:12-13)

- A. this commandment is living and powerful, because of the way the Holy Spirit uses it
 - 1. it is sharp enough to cut all the way to your innermost parts
 - 2. it discerns even the thoughts and intents of your heart
- B. No creature is hidden from God's sight
 - 1. you are naked to His eyes
 - 2. you are open to His eyes
- C. This One, God, whose word cuts open your innermost being, whose eyes see right through you, this is the one with whom you have to do; to whom you must give an account
- D. Your breaking of the first commandment, and of God's entire law, is completely exposed to God, with whom you have to do
- E. Therefore there is no hope in hiding your sin from God

V. Our Hope in the Lord Jesus' Obedience to the First Commandment (Hebrews 4:14-16)

- A. He was tempted in all , without sin!
- B. He is our great high priest, who makes the way for us into the presence of God
- C. Through Him we approach the throne of God; when we do, we find it a throne of grace where mercy is dispensed freely

CONCLUSION

The first commandment, then, commands us not to worship anything else as if it were a god; worshiping it either instead of God or with God. The forbidding this sin also forbids every other sin of that kind, in which we give to something else the trust and affection we should have for God alone. It also requires us to be devoted to God to the highest degree in every area of life. Our very hearts are laid bare before God regarding this commandment, so we have no hope of hiding our sin from His all-seeing eyes. Therefore we must hope in the Lord Jesus Christ, who has made the way for us by His blood.

“Thou” is correct - you in the singular.

Matthew 6:24-26 "No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon. (25) "Therefore I say to you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what

you will drink; nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing? (26) Look at the birds of the air, for they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they?

Colossians 3:5 Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry.

Hopkins

love of God

desire

joy

zeal

fear of God

servile

filial

“who fear as much to offend as to suffer for it”

invocation and praise of God or

invocation of the name of God in our prayers and praises

-this appertains to his outward worship

Downs:

“Jesus Christ the righteous.”

Has God always been your highest priority, had your complete allegiance, had all your affections

If this were a 10-question test, and you had to make 100 to pass, you would already be flunking the test, right?

What have you bowed down to? Here in the US we are more sophisticated in our idolatry.

JRY:

It's not that your car is a god. But this commandment demands your total devotion to God, all your affections for God.

Making up a god of our liking

Hodgins:

Prohibited:

1. atheism

2. agnosticism

3. polytheism

4. pluralism or syncretism
 - all religions worship the same God
5. idolatry proper