

INTRODUCTION

It has been good for us, these past few weeks, to hear the word of God in the First Commandment, and to consider what it means.

The First Commandment makes clear that God alone is to be worshipped; we are to worship no one and nothing else.

And our worship of God alone is not a matter of outward appearance and practice only, but also of the heart, since He sees not only everything we do, but also everything we think.

Anything besides God that gets any worship from us is rightly called an idol, even if it is just something imagined in the mind.

We are to worship God not as we might imagine Him to be, or could wish Him to be, but as He truly is. We must worship God as the Bible reveals Him to be.

God is holy. That is, He is separate from anything sinful and pure in Himself from anything sinful. Jesus Christ, the Son of God and Son of Man, is holy; He is the holy One. So, the first commandment can be understood in the words of Peter:

1 Peter 1:15-16a ...as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy...Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy.

We are to depend on God, pray to God, thank God, honor God, serve God, submit to God, repent toward God, delight in God, learn of God, and praise God. These things are God's due from us, and so these things are our duty toward Him. The first commandment teaches us to give to God all His due, and not to give it to anyone or anything else; not to give to any creature what we owe to the Creator.

So much we have considered together already under the heading of The First Commandment. Before going on to The Second Commandment, I have one more exhortation to put to you from The First Commandment.

What I am prepared to say to you, I learned reading James Durham, Scottish covenanter pastor from the 1600s. His book on The Ten Commandments takes the standard approach, giving essentially the same interpretation and saying many of the same things as can be found in John Calvin, in the Larger Catechism, and in other Puritan-era works on The Ten Commandments. But James Durham's book is more detailed than some other sources. So it is somewhat hard to wade through, but offers some very helpful insight that I did not find anywhere else.

In one section of his chapter on The First Commandment, James Durham offered five rules by which we can differentiate between appropriate attention to things in this life, and excessive attention to them, which leads to us using them as idols, giving them what devotion belongs to God only. He refers to this as making idols in our hearts, and references

Ezekiel 14:1-3a Then came certain of the elders of Israel unto me, and sat before me. (2) And the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, (3) Son of man, these men have set up their idols in their heart...

That way of applying The First Commandment was immediately helpful to me, as soon as I read it. Upon re-reading and studying it, I found it very helpful, and I think you will, also.

Of course there is in us a continuing struggle against the temptation to devote ourselves to things that are blatantly wicked. The world, the flesh, and the devil keep shooting those darts at us. By use of God's law, including The First Commandment, we must resist all temptations to love what is wicked, and instead love God and all that is good.

But what of the temptation not to devote ourselves to wicked things, but to devote ourselves excessively to good things, so that we actually love the good things that God has given us instead of loving Him.

To help us deal with such temptation, I have paraphrased and adapted that section in James Durham's book to put to you today. I speak to you today about five ways for us to test ourselves for the presence of idolatry in its most subtle form: the kind of idolatry where we make idols in our hearts of things that are not in themselves wicked, even good things that God has given us to use in this life.

TEXT

Exodus 20:2-3 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.

BODY

There can be pollutants in water, which are easy to detect. You can see dirt in your water. You can smell sulphur in your water. But there can be pollutants in your water, which are not easy to detect, such as harmful bacteria. So, we send samples of our water off to a laboratory, for tests to be run that can detect those more subtle pollutants, so they can be addressed in some way, that they can be filtered out, or in some other way removed, so that our drinking water can be clean.

So, here are five questions to ask yourself, to test for the presence of idolatry in your heart.

- I. Is anything drowning your love for God, making you neglect some duty you owe Him?
 - A. As Demas - 2 Timothy 4:10 For Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world, and is departed unto Thessalonica; Crescens to Galatia, Titus unto Dalmatia.
 - B. Is there some duty you had been doing, but because of loving something in this world, you have stopped doing it?
 - C. Is there some duty that, because of your love for something in this world, you never have started doing?
 - D. Careful! We are talking about things that actually are your duty to God.
 1. not leaving your family to go on a mission trip
 2. the things the word of God actually tells you is your duty
 - E. Staying close to the example of Demas
 1. devoting yourself to our Lord's apostles
 2. supporting the work of the missionaries
 3. standing by a Christian friend who is in difficult circumstances
 - F. Thinking of things that are pretty obvious
 1. assembling for worship on the Lord's Day
 2. praying
 3. meditating on the scriptures, the word of God

Is anything drowning your love for God, making you neglect some duty you owe Him?

II. Is anything partly marring the performance of your duties to God?

- A. As Eli - 1 Samuel 2:29 Wherefore kick ye at my sacrifice and at mine offering, which I have commanded in my habitation; and honourest thy sons above me, to make yourselves fat with the chiefest of all the offerings of Israel my people?
- B. That is, you are not neglecting your duty completely, as Demas, but what you are doing is partly messed up or corrupted.
- C. Examples
 - 1. as a parent, you are not neglecting completely to raise your children, but your love for something in this world is making you mess it up
 - 2. as an employee, you are not neglecting completely to go to work, but your love for something in this world is making you not do your work well and faithfully

Is anything drowning your love for God, making you neglect some duty you owe Him?

Is anything partly marring the performance of your duties to God?

- III. Is anything so taking up your time that you are not giving the necessary time to the worship of God
- A. Worship, meaning
 - 1. prayer
 - 2. hearing the word of God
 - B. Whether
 - 1. daily
 - 2. weekly
 - C. Ephesians 5:15-16 See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, (16) Redeeming the time, because the days are evil.
 - 1. Calvin: everything around us tends to corrupt and mislead us...so that time cannot be dedicated to God without being in some way redeemed
 - 2. Calvin: what shall be the price of its redemption?
 - a) to withdraw from the endless variety of allurements
 - b) to rid ourselves from the cares and pleasures of the world
 - D. SKY: your phone or computer
 - 1. browsing social media
 - 2. playing games
 - 3. shopping
 - E. Examples
 - 1. Daniel 6:10 Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went into his house; and his windows being open in his chamber toward Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime.
 - 2. Mark 1:35 And in the morning, rising up a great while before day, he went out, and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed.

Is anything drowning your love for God, making you neglect some duty you owe Him?

Is anything partly marring the performance of your duties to God?

Is anything so taking up your time that you are not giving the necessary time to the worship of God

- IV. Is anything indisposing you for the worship of God?
- A. So that when you are praying or hearing the word,
 - 1. your heart is carried away after that other thing
 - 2. your mind is taken up with that other thing
 - B. Ezekiel 33:30-32 Also, thou son of man, the children of thy people still are talking against thee by the walls and in the doors of the houses, and speak one to another, every one to his brother, saying, Come, I pray you, and hear what is the word that cometh forth from the LORD. (31) And they come unto thee as the people cometh, and they sit before thee as my people, and they hear thy words, but they will not do them: for with their mouth they shew much love, but their heart goeth after their covetousness. (32) And, lo, thou art unto them as a very lovely song of one that hath a pleasant voice, and can play well on an instrument: for they hear thy words, but they do them not.
 - C. This could happen
 - 1. day by day
 - 2. on the Lord's Day in the assembly

Is anything drowning your love for God, making you neglect some duty you owe Him?

Is anything partly marring the performance of your duties to God?

Is anything so taking up your time that you are not giving the necessary time to the worship of God

Is anything indisposing you for the worship of God?

- V. Is anything haunting your mind?
- A. Is there anything that, as soon as you are not busy and sit still, it almost always comes to mind?
 - 1. When you lie down to try to sleep, or when you wake up but haven't yet gotten out of bed?
 - 2. When you are alone driving the car?
 - B. Are you thinking about something at times when thinking about it does not contribute to the furtherance of any good object
 - C. Is there something you think about so much of the time that you hardly ever think about better things?
 - D. Is there anything in your thoughts that has gone beyond being a too-frequent visitor, and actually won't leave?

CONCLUSION

Is anything drowning your love for God, making you neglect some duty you owe Him?

Is anything partly marring the performance of your duties to God?

Is anything so taking up your time that you are not giving the necessary time to the worship of God

Is anything indisposing you for the worship of God?

Is anything haunting your mind?

If so, this may indicate the presence of subtle idolatry in your heart, of disobedience to The First Commandment, in which you give to some good thing the devotion that belongs to God only.

Repent and be forgiven

Trust in Jesus

Pray that God will help you

Raise your heart from earth up to heaven

Colossians 3:1-2 If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. (2) Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth.

Jeremiah - Call to Worship and Opening Prayer - Colossians 3:1-4

Alvin - Scripture Reading - Psalm 119:81-88

~~Rael~~ Jeff - Congregational Prayer

Rita - Prelude

Rita - Trinity xvi "Doxology" + Trinity 1 "All People That On Earth Do Dwell" -

Andrew lead

Haven - Trinity 205 "Christ the Lord Is Risen Today" - ~~Alex~~ lead

Audrey - Trinity 178 "O Sacred Head, Now Wounded"