

God on True Worship

The Ten Commandments

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Bible Verse: Exodus 20:4-6
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We're going to resume our study of the 10 Commandments today. We have completed the first commandment and we are going to move on to the second commandment, but since it's been three weeks since we were in them, I'd like to read them all together and then focus in on the second one as we begin. This is God's moral law. It is applicable to all men at all times, and it is the revelation of his will for our worship of him and our love for one another.

So turn in your Bibles to Exodus 20 if you've not already done so, and we'll begin in verse 3 where it says,

3 "You shall have no other gods before Me. 4 You shall not make for yourself an idol, or any likeness of what is in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the water under the earth. 5 You shall not worship them or serve them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children, on the third and the fourth generations of those who hate Me, 6 but showing lovingkindness to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments. 7 You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain, for the LORD will not leave him unpunished who takes His name in vain. 8 Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. 9 Six days you shall labor and do all your work, 10 but the seventh day is a sabbath of the LORD your God; in it you shall not do any work, you or your son or your daughter, your male or your female servant or your cattle or your sojourner who stays with you. 11 For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day; therefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day and made it holy. 12 Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be prolonged in the land which the LORD your God gives you. 13 You shall not murder. 14 You shall not commit adultery. 15 You shall not steal. 16 You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor. 17 You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife or his male servant or his female servant or his ox or his donkey or anything that belongs to your neighbor."

Now what we've said as we approach the 10 Commandments over the past few months is that the entire Bible really is the context of the 10 Commandments. We need the entire word of God to help us understand the fullness of what is meant by the passage that we just read, and you can see that clearly when you read the Sermon on the Mount and you read in chapter 5 what the Lord Jesus said. He said that the sin of murder is not simply about the physical act but that it also prohibits the sin of hatred because hatred is what leads to murder. The sin of adultery is not simply the physical act but it is the lust in the heart that leads to the act. The commandments as we read them in Exodus 20 are like capstones that describe an entire category of sins that deal with the heart as well as the external man, very important for us to understand that.

Along with that, it's important for us to recognize that all of God's word is inspired and so Scripture helps us interpret Scripture and the surest and the best commentary on Scripture is the Bible itself. So as we go through these commandments, we search the Scriptures out to see what they say so that we can understand the fullness of them.

There was another thing that we've done in the way that we're approaching these. For these 10 Commandments we're doing 20 messages, two per commandment, and there's a reason for that that I explained a few weeks ago but I'm happy to refresh your memory as we do. It takes time to sort these things out. It takes time to simply understand what is being commanded and what is being forbidden by the 10 Commandments, simply to understand them in the full context of Scripture. Along with that and following that, it takes a whole other realm of thinking and searching to understand how they apply to our lives and how we violate these commandments and the need that we have for forgiveness of our sins against them. And so we need to understand them and we need to apply them and we're taking our time to do it, and I just personally, I just think that this is the right way to do it because there would be a way, there would be an approach to make with the commandments to just kind of rush through them, not realize how deeply they go into our hearts, and we could come out harder on the other side with hearts that are hardened against the law of God simply because we treated it so casually and so quickly rather than letting it be like a hammer that breaks the rock of our heart, and to have a superficial acquaintance of these commandments, not really searching us out and searching us out in our sin.

So that's why we're approaching them the way that we are. We're taking our time to take them seriously and there's a long-term plan involved here, a long-term work of the law of God on the heart is the one thing that will prepare hearts for the gospel of Jesus Christ. In one sense, before we talk about Christ as Savior, before we talk about forgiveness and redemption, we need to understand that we are slaves of sin, that we are in bondage to sin and that we are really and truly guilty before a holy God. The one who thinks lightly of guilt is going to think lightly of Christ. The law of God helps us see our sin and see the multiplicity of our sins and the depth of our sin, and Jesus said the one who has been forgiven little, loves little. In other words, if you think your sin has been a light matter and not all of that serious in its offense to God, then you're going to love Christ and appreciate him in a very shallow way because you're going to have this underlying sense of self-righteousness whether you acknowledge it or not. However, if the law of God has

done a work in your heart and exposed sin deeply and you see how guilty you are, then for someone to come and present Christ to you and say that Christ has borne your sin at the cross and he has forgiven all of your sin and all of his righteousness covers you, and God looks at you as having fulfilled all of his law because of you being in union with Christ, then you're going to see Christ in a whole different way and his glories are going to be opened up to your soul in a way that you would otherwise miss. So the one who thinks that he has sinned little is going to love Christ little. The one who understands his sin more deeply is going to love Christ deeply and is going to have an appreciation for the gospel of Christ. So there's a long-term plan as we look at these things together from God's word.

So with that bit of review and introduction, last time that we were in the 10 Commandments we looked at the first commandment there in verse 3. Exodus 20:3, "You shall have no other gods before Me." And simply stated, this commandment requires us, it requires you to worship the right God. You must worship the right God. It is of no value to have a religion if it is not directed toward the God of the Bible. Indeed, false religion is the greatest of sins, having a false god, believing in the wrong god is the greatest of sins as measured by the fact that it is a violation of the very first and foundational commandment of them all. God is holy and he does not tolerate any other rivals. He does not tolerate anyone having a god other than him. So to worship a god that is not the God of the Bible, trying to worship God apart from faith alone in Jesus Christ alone is the most serious and deadly sin that anyone could commit.

Now that sounds strange to our modern ears. We tend to think that as long as someone is outwardly moral and they have some kind of religion, well, he's a pretty good bloke because he's a religious guy with some outward morality. That is not how God sees it at all. God sees false worship as a direct affront to his holiness and so it is essential for us to know him as he has revealed himself to be. You must worship the right God. What we come to now in the second commandment is this just by way of an overview statement, the second commandment requires us to worship the right God in the right way. We must worship the right God in the right way and we're going to take two weeks to look at this commandment and we'll find it found there in verses 4 through 6. Exodus 20:4-6. Let's read that and this will be our primary text for this morning. The second commandment says,

4 "You shall not make for yourself an idol, or any likeness of what is in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the water under the earth. 5 You shall not worship them or serve them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children, on the third and the fourth generations of those who hate Me, 6 but showing lovingkindness to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments."

Here's what I think is the right starting point for understanding the import of the second commandment. We must understand that God is an infinite, invisible, omnipotent, and uncreated spirit. In order to worship the true God in a true way, you must understand who

he is and what his essence is like. And I want you to turn back in the New Testament to 1 Timothy 1. I want to show you a couple of passages from that letter from Paul. 1 Timothy 1. I think this is the right place to get us oriented. It will help us understand why this commandment is so vital to our understanding and proper worship of God.

1 Timothy 1:17 says this, "Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen." What is the nature of God, the God who commands us to worship him and to worship him alone? What is the nature of God who commands us to worship in a particular way? He is eternal. He had no beginning. He will have no end. He is immortal. He is invisible, we cannot see him with our eyes. He is the only God. So the nature of God, the essence of God himself is an invisible, immortal, eternal, uncreated essence. He is completely different from us. He is unlike us. And so we start from that premise.

Look at chapter 6 in 1 Timothy. Chapter 6, verse 13, where the Apostle Paul says, "I charge you in the presence of God, who gives life to all things, and of Christ Jesus, who testified the good confession before Pontius Pilate, that you keep the commandment without stain or reproach until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ, which He will bring about at the proper time," now watch this, "He who is the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords, who alone possesses immortality and dwells in unapproachable light, whom no man has seen or can see." No man has seen God. No man can see God. And the Apostle John said the same thing in 1 John 4:12 when he said, "No one has seen God at any time." No one has seen his full essence. Jesus Christ came as God in human flesh but as we sing in the Christmas carol, "Veiled in flesh, the Godhead see. Hail, the Incarnate Deity." The essence of God was full in Christ but we did not see it in the full extent of its eternal essence, its eternal glory, because it was veiled in the flesh of Christ.

So God is invisible. God is infinite. God is uncreated. We must start there with who he is and that nature of God informs the way and informs our understanding about what true worship must be like and that is the focus of the second commandment as we go back to Exodus 20. We are worshiping an unseen God. We worship an invisible, eternal God, and here's the thing, here's kind of the pivot point, the transition, if you will, that we want to make here, true worship therefore must correspond to the nature of God, not to the nature of man. Our worship of God must be in accordance with who he is rather than what we are.

I forget where I saw the title, I think it was in a used bookstore not long ago. There was this supposedly religious book written by a woman and the title says, "A God-like Me," and the idea was to bring a feminine aspect to God so that women could better identify with him. That is rank blasphemy and heresy of the grossest kind to conform God to the image of man, to conform God to the image of woman, and then worship a God of your own making. That's not how it works. We don't bring God down to our level. We see who he is as he's revealed himself to be and we conform our worship to who he is rather than trying to make him like us. That's the beginning lie in the garden of Eden from Satan to Eve.

So beloved, we must understand this. Because God is holy, because God is uncreated, and because he is Lord and he is God and he has all authority, that means something radically important for our worship not only Sundays but throughout our lives in our daily living: you can only truly approach God in the way that he has appointed you to do so. You cannot make up your own worship and have it be pleasing to God. We worship him according to who he is and what he has revealed that he wants worship to be like. This is very very essential, very very basic, and we're dealing at the realm of understanding the most fundamental presuppositions of Christianity here in a way that makes us uncomfortable perhaps as we wrestle with the outworking of these things. We're used to seeing churches and some of you are used to coming from churches where, you know, worship meant all kinds of different things and people dance on the platform and there's fog machines and lights and all kinds of stuff designed to stimulate you visually and to bypass your mind to create certain emotions in your heart, and this is all false worship. It's all very very bad and very very wicked because it leads people away from true worship as God has appointed it to be. We do not get to invent our own ways of worship. God has revealed how he wants us to worship him and our obedience is to respond in that way, and we'll make this clear as we finish today and as we go into next week as well.

God tells us how to worship him and in this passage, in this commandment for today's sake we're going to see two principles. First of all, we're going to see that we are not to make an idol. This commandment tells you do not make an idol and here it is that we begin to see the importance of the invisible nature of God when it comes to true worship. Verse 4, Exodus 20:4 says this, "You shall not make for yourself an idol, or any likeness of what is in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the water under the earth." Now let's just make a general observation about this passage, about this verse. What we have in that verse is an exhaustive list of everything in the material universe. When you talk about the heaven above or the earth or in the water under the earth, you're talking about everything that there is in creation and God says do not make an image of anything that you see in order to use it as part of your worship.

Look at verse 5 as verses 4 and 5 connect together and give us a full picture of it. "You shall not worship them or serve them." You are not to take things that you see in the material world and fashion something for worship out of them, nor are you to worship them themselves or use them to somehow stimulate you in your worship of God. Nothing in the heavens, nothing on earth, nothing in the waters is to be used as a material aid to your worship. Nothing is to be made into a likeness for use in worship. We're going to unpack all of this as we go along here today. We're just laying out the parameters to get us started.

Philip Ryken in his book on the 10 Commandments says this, he says, "An idol was something crafted by a tool, whether it was carved out of wood, chiseled out of stone, or engraved in metal, it was cut and shaped by human hands. It was a man-made representation of some divine being." So you have people making idols to help them in their worship using stone, using gold, using silver, whatever it is, using that physical

object to be an aid in worship. Israel was guilty of this as we'll see in Exodus 32 in just a moment.

Here's the crucial point that we need to understand that opens up a whole world and realm of understanding for us as we consider this. Even if you were making a statue of some kind, a stone object or whatever to represent the true God as Israel did in Exodus 32, even if that statue was meant to represent the true God, understand this, a finite physical form by definition misrepresents God. To have a physical representation of the true God is to misrepresent him because the true God is invisible. He cannot be seen. The true God is omnipresent, he is not bound by space, by limitations of space. And so to take anything in the earth and to reduce it into something that you say, "This is a picture of my God. This helps me think about God. This helps me worship God." By definition it is false because it reduces the infinite invisible God to a finite physical object.

Look at Deuteronomy 4 as Scripture helps us interpret Scripture here. A finite physical form, anything visual cannot accurately represent the holy, eternal, invisible God. That's our point for this morning, and so in Deuteronomy 4:15, Moses instructing the people after they had passed through the wilderness, after they had come out of the Red Sea and they were about to enter into the Promised Land, Moses warns them against this sin of idolatry when he says in verse 15, "So watch yourselves carefully, since you did not see any form on the day the LORD spoke to you at Horeb from the midst of the fire." You didn't see anything physical when God delivered you and so watch yourselves carefully, verse 16, "so that you do not act corruptly and make a graven image for yourselves in the form of any figure, the likeness of male or female, the likeness of any animal that is on the earth, the likeness of any winged bird that flies in the sky, the likeness of anything that creeps on the ground, the likeness of any fish that is in the water below the earth." Do you see it there? Don't make any form for worship. Don't do anything from what you see in the sky, what you see on earth, or what might be found in the water, a fuller explanation, a fuller discussion of what we've just seen in Exodus 20:4.

Now how would this be violated? Well, in the subsequent history of Israel we see how this is violated and so I ask you to turn to Exodus 32. The implications of this as we work through them are breathtaking. They have implications for literally billions of people in their false religion, and so stay with me because this is very very important and it even impacts the room in which we are sitting here today.

Exodus 32:1, "Now when the people saw that Moses delayed to come down from the mountain, the people assembled about Aaron and said to him, 'Come, make us a god who will go before us; as for this Moses, the man who brought us up from the land of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him.'" They're saying, "Make us a physical object that we can use in worship." And Aaron, who should have known better, said to them in verse 2, "'Tear off the gold rings which are in the ears of your wives, your sons, and your daughters, and bring them to me.' Then all the people tore off the gold rings which were in their ears and brought them to Aaron. He took this from their hand, and fashioned it with a graving tool and made it into a molten calf; and they said, 'This is your god, O Israel, who brought you up from the land of Egypt.'" What they're saying here is that this

calf, this representation of animal strength, is a representation of the God who delivered you from Egypt. Now you have a physical object to help remind you that God is strong and able to deliver and the calf became an image of the true God. Understand this, it's not that they thought that this thing that had just been made in front of them was actually the God that had delivered them, they're saying this is a representation of the God who delivered you. The calf represented God to them. It was a physical image of the God who is a spirit, an unseen spirit, and that is precisely what is prohibited by the second commandment. They had no more than gotten the 10 Commandments and they were falling into this error that God had specifically warned them not to do.

Now let's take a little breather here, a little bit of a time out and clarify what the commandment isn't talking about and what it is talking about. This commandment, contrary to some, is not a prohibition against all imagery whatsoever. It's not a prohibition against artwork in general. It's not a prohibition of taking photographs of your family. It's not a prohibition of building statues to honor men from history. It's not talking about that in those realms where worship is not involved. We know that to be true because God commanded later in the book of Exodus, he commanded certain images to be made for decorative purposes in the tabernacle. You can read about that in Exodus 25. The mercy seat had two angels with their wings stretched across the ark, and so it wasn't a prohibition against all imagery whatsoever. In Numbers 21, he prescribed the bronze serpent for Israel to use, and so it's not a prohibition against every kind of imagery whatsoever, a blanket prohibition of all kinds because other Scripture would show that God commanded that kind of thing in other places. But here's the point, this is the point that I'm about to give you, this is the point of the second commandment: you must not use images, you must not use physical images, physical materials, physical paintings, physical pictures, physical objects, you must not use images to facilitate your conception of who God is. You must not do that. You must not look to things of a physical nature to inform your image of God. You must not look to physical images in order to facilitate your worship of God. That's wrong, that is sinful, and the implications of that are very very far reaching indeed and I can give you an undeniable example from modern religion.

You might ask yourself this question, "Do we really need this command? Is this command so important? Are we really in our modern age here in the 21st century, are we in danger of falling into this kind of idolatry? [scoffs] We're beyond that. Don't you understand, we're modern men?" Well, not so much and not so fast. If you grew up in the Roman Catholic Church and you received any kind of catechism instruction in the Roman Catholic Church, you learned a different version of the 10 Commandments. You learned a different approach to the 10 Commandments and it's represented today in the second edition of the current catechism of the Catholic Church where they omit the second commandment from their discussion of the 10 Commandments. They suppress the very commandment that we are studying now and they have done it for centuries. You go and on the edition that I have, the official Catholic Imprimatur of the Pope, on pages 551-552, you can see how they suppress and hide the second commandment in their discussion of the 10 Commandments.

Now why do they do that? Why would they do that? And how do they get to 10, then, when they leave out the second commandment? Well, they do it this way: they divide the 10th commandment into two, saying, "You shall not covet your neighbor's wife," number 9, and number 10, "You shall not covet your neighbor's goods." That's how they get to 10 when they leave out the second commandment. But why would the Catholic Church do that and why would they do it for so many centuries as they continued to add other accretions to their form of worship? Why would they do that? Well, if you've ever been in a Catholic Church, if you've ever been to a Catholic service, you know how visual, how visual it is meant to be. There are statues around. There are paintings around. You know, they go through the false worship of the Mass and hold up the bread and hold up the cup as an object of veneration. All of this physical stimulation designed to represent God to the people, and it is wrong and it is sinful and it's a violation of what God said so clearly in the second commandment.

My friend Phil Johnson said this about it. "Roman Catholic worship depends on the veneration of graven images. That is the very kind of externalism and ritual that this commandment forbids. By suppressing this commandment in their catechisms and doctrine, the Roman Catholic Church has for generations attempted to obscure from their people this part of the law of God. In other words, they have deliberately silenced that portion of the Decalogue that was given expressly as a corrective to the form of religion they have adopted." He goes on to say, "There is no way to reconcile this commandment with the gross ritualism of the Roman Catholic Church. What this commandment forbids is the very thing Roman Catholic worship encourages."

Look, there is 1 ¼ billion Catholics in the world and so we need to do away with the conceit of the modern mind that says, "We're not subject to this. We're not drawn to this." The hearts of men are idol factories and the Catholic Church feeds that desire for idolatry in the whole system of worship that they've adopted, and it's worse overseas than it is in America. All of the statues and the idols and the things of Mary, oh, it just pains my heart to think about it, pains my heart to think about how it is a slander against God, and pains my heart to think about the darkness that these people have been brought into by the leadership of that false system.

So, yes, we need this commandment and then you go into the non-Christian religions where temples are all built around the whole system of having some kind of statue in front of you to help you worship. All of humanity is subject to this, is subject to sinning against God in precisely the way that has been forbidden and therefore it's very important for us to understand this, very important for us to come to grips with it, and to let it teach us about true worship which is what we're going to see in a few moments.

Well, by contrast take a moment and just look around the room that you're in right now. Look at the ceiling. Look at the thing behind me. Look at the walls. We have an aesthetically pleasing worship center but you will not see any visual images in it whatsoever, not even a cross. Now I'm not banging on friendly churches that have a cross in their worship center. That's okay but we don't have one and there's a reason for that. There are no visual images in order to teach and instruct by their absence that our

worship is spiritual not visual. We worship in the spirit of God by faith not based on physical things that we see with our eyes or that we can touch with our hands. And so the very nature in the way a worship center is built and decorated, for lack of a better word, says something about what the church understands about this commandment and about the role of visual objects in worship and we deliberately, beloved, we have deliberately made this as plain as possible in order that no one would associate anything visual with their worship of God, and it's out of deference and out of our understanding of obedience to the second commandment that we do that.

Now going further, going further when I mentioned earlier, you know, the whole visual element of drama and dance and all these kinds of things that other people do, understand this, beloved, understand that that appeal to your material eye, that appeal to what you can see, it is leading you away from the invisible nature of worship, the invisible nature of God and stimulating you by visual stimulation rather than by instruction from the word of God. That is a serious mistake. That is a serious mistake and the fact that people can attract thousands by doing that doesn't say anything about a work of God in their midst whatsoever. If you build up idols, you'll attract idolaters. That's not saying anything good about what's happening in the worship that you are supposedly offering to God. There needs to be a widespread rethinking of these things in professing evangelical churches and get away from the visual stimulation, the appeal to the flesh, and to get back to the nature of worship as God intended it to be.

Now let me go on to my second point here this morning and we'll see this carried out. We've said do not make an idol from verse 4 as the first point, we'll go back to Exodus 20. Exodus 20:4, "You shall not make for yourself an idol." In verse 5, "You shall not worship them or serve them." So our second point here this morning is: do not worship an idol. The second part of this commandment forbids us to worship any images in his name.

Look at verse 5, "You shall not worship them or serve them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children, on the third and the fourth generations of those who hate Me." We'll talk about the jealousy of God next week and the meaning of how he visits iniquity on subsequent generations. We'll talk about all of that next week so you'll want to be back here for that. For now we're just going to focus on this nature of worship and not worshipping an idol.

Let's think about it this way. The second commandment requires us to think about the way that we worship. This isn't simply, we're not simply talking about what we do on Sunday morning but the whole way that you think about worshipping God in your own life from your own heart. Here's the thing to understand, beloved: we worship by faith, not by sight. Scripture says we walk by faith, not by sight, and to understand that is to walk through the door into a different way of thinking about worship than many of us have been accustomed to do. Let me just break it down into two subparts here. True worship is spiritual worship. True worship is spiritual worship and it could be no other way because true worship of God pertains to a heavenly realm, it pertains to a spiritual realm. It is not

physical. God is not physical and therefore the right worship of him could not be physical either.

Look at Colossians 2 with me. Colossians 2 in verses 20-23 you find this, "If you have died with Christ to the elementary principles of the world, why, as if you were living in the world, do you submit yourself to decrees, such as, 'Do not handle, do not taste, do not touch!'" If you are in Christ and you have an invisible union with him certified to you by the testimony of the word of God, certified to your heart by the ministry of the Holy Spirit, why if you have that spiritual higher realm are you so caught up in physical commands? Do not handle. Do not taste. Do not touch. Verse 22, "(which all refer to things destined to perish with use) in accordance with the commandments and teachings of men? These are matters which have, to be sure, the appearance of wisdom in self-made religion and self-abasement and severe treatment of the body, but are of no value against fleshly indulgence." You're just making it up, Paul says. This is not God-appointed worship to have all kinds of dietary restrictions that you do for religious reasons, not for health reasons, for religious reasons. What are you doing? What are you thinking? And we find this and this is where it just becomes so difficult. Maybe you've seen when the resurrection day celebration comes around, there's inevitably reports from around the world of people who are reenacting the crucifixion and men will allow themselves to be crucified, or they'll beat themselves with whips in order to subdue their body and to show sacrifice to the Lord and, you know, they're going to shed their own blood as an act of worship. That's all idolatry. There is nothing meritorious in that at all, in fact, it's a great great sin. It's a denial of the final sacrifice of Christ to try to reenact it in that way, and to treat your body with severity is a denial of the reality that worship is spiritual not physical.

So sinners will beat their body but they won't bow their hearts. They'll go through all kinds of rules and religion but they won't submit their will to Christ in an invisible act of worship, in a final principle that settles life going forward that says, "You're Lord and I'm not." Instead they make up all of their own acts and they go through all of these physical machinations wanting to worship in their own way rather than coming to God through the way that he's appointed through faith alone, in Christ alone, based on the testimony of Scripture alone, to the glory of God alone. It's a completely different, these are two completely different realms.

Another man said this and I quote, "Worship, true worship is an internal response of the heart, not merely external actions such as bowing and genuflecting and making bodily motions. True worship is a spontaneous result of true love for God, not something that can be prescribed by forms and rituals, and its only proper object is God himself, not some visible representation of Him."

Here's what we're saying, beloved: the prohibition against using physical objects in worship is designed to teach you that true worship is spiritual. It is a matter of the heart, not something external to you, and that leads us to understand that it's a matter of the heart, it's a matter of responding to what God has revealed by faith rather than trying to achieve something by the actions of your own hands and the works of your own hands.

We worship by faith, not by sight, and we're not to bring physical objects supposedly to represent God or to help us in our conception of God, thinking that that's making us more holy. It's actually driving you further away.

I'd planned to mention this next week and I say this sympathetically but it needs to be said: those of you that have one of those pictures of Jesus hanging up in your house, you need to take it down and get rid of it. That is not Jesus. That's not a picture of Jesus. It's a physical representation that can only misrepresent him. It's a sinful artist conception on paper with ink, and how can that possibly, I ask you, how could that possibly be a right representation of our Incarnate Lord as a sinful artist centuries later has not possible way of rightly representing the sinless face of our Lord? And so that picture is simply confusing your mind, confusing your heart, and causing you to associate Christ with something made by man rather than being content with what's been revealed to us in his word. It can't help but misrepresent him. It can't help but mislead you into a wrong conception of who God is.

And I'll go further. I think it is wrong for men to portray Christ in movies. How can this do anything other than, with apology, well, not with apologies but, you know, with due recognition of Mel Gibson or whoever it was that does these things, how can a sinful man pretending to be Christ possibly be a true representation of who he is and what he's like? It's impossible and so it only seals wrong images of God into your mind in a way that misleads you and misdirects your worship, and that is not a matter of small consequence. That's why the second commandment is here.

Now I'm not going to, you know, I'm not going to go into your homes and check the walls for what you've got up there. You know, you can do with this what you choose to do but these physical representations of who God is, of who Christ is, is what is prohibited by the second commandment. Well, what are we to do then? If we're not to rely on physical objects to enable our worship, then what are we to do? How do we rightly worship the true God then if it's not by what we see and by what we do with bowing and genuflecting and all of this other stuff that men have made up over the centuries and then taken men's consciences captive by saying you must do this or you're not worshipping God correctly? What are we to do?

Well, if you want to make this a second subpoint in your notes: truth is essential to true worship. Truth is essential to true worship. Beloved, if you want to truly worship God, you must use your mind. You must think rightly about who God is if you are going to give him worship that corresponds to his true nature. You can't make it up. You have to go by what is revealed. Jesus said when he was asked what's the greatest commandment, he said, "You must worship the Lord your God with all of your heart, with all of your soul, with all of your strength, and with all of your," what? "Your mind." You must worship God with all of your mind. You must apply your mind to understand truth, to read, study and understand truth so that you have a right conception of God and you worship according to that conception that he has revealed to you in his word. You use your mind to understand. Paul said in Romans 12:2, "do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your," what? "Your mind, so that you may prove

what the will of God is, that which is true and acceptable and perfect," using a loose paraphrase there. Your mind is the agent of transformation. Your mind is the agent of true worship. You must understand truth as God has revealed himself to be and then you honor him according to what he has said about himself.

So you compare this, and I just have images of being in a Catholic Church. I haven't been in a Catholic Church many times but, oh, it pains me to remember these kinds of things. I was at a Catholic wedding many many many years ago, long before I even met Nancy, and I remember the bride coming in, kneeling down before a statue of Mary, kissing it, and then getting up and proceeding in to be joined to her husband. That's awful. That's terrible. You're bowing down to plaster? You're kissing an image of Mary who's not even worthy of veneration, who herself was a sinner, and that's what you're kissing? This is your worship? You kiss plaster as an act of worship? What's wrong with you? What's wrong with you? Why this violation of the commandment of God?

Compare that to true worship, true worship which, just to stay with the passages, that texts that we've looked at here today, "God, I understand You're immortal, invisible, You're God only wise. I do not have the mind to comprehend the fullness of what that means. You are greater than me, You transcend me and I don't know the fullness of what that means but, Lord, I worship You according to what You know to be true about Yourself. I worship an invisible God from the depths of my heart and I give You honor as God's Sovereign over all." The difference between that and kissing plaster should be evident in your mind and cause you to hate the one and want to move in the direction of the other.

So we use our minds to understand God's self-revelation in Scripture. You obey him from your soul. The Holy Spirit conforms you to Christ. In other words, beloved, to state this another way, true worship involves God's revealed truth and faith, not outward appearances. We rely on what we know to be true, not on what we see or what we feel, simply on what we feel. I think, it might be an extended application but I think it's a right application of this to understand that we don't even worship God according to the way that we feel in response to our external circumstances because our external circumstances come and go, they change, they're shifting, whereas the true God is immutable, he's unchanging, he never changes. And so our worship doesn't rise and fall as our circumstances rise and fall, our worship is anchored in the eternal realities of who God is and we worship him by what he has revealed himself to be. Look, this is beyond our ability to fulfill perfectly because we are creatures of the flesh. We are creatures of flesh and we respond and we live in an environment that is fleshly, that is physical, and we need help just to transcend that. We need the help of the Holy Spirit to move us beyond our physical realm and enable us to worship God as he's commanded us to worship him.

Do you know what this commandment ultimately does as all of the commandments do? Ultimately this commandment forces us to recognize our need for the Lord Jesus Christ. Because we all tend to respond in physical ways, we respond to the physical world around us, we don't worship God in the fullness of who he is, this second commandment condemns us just like the first one did. Jesus said in John 4:24, he said, "God is spirit, and

those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth." That's what we're saying here today. And when you go to God's word, when you see the fullness of his revelation as the Old Testament is fulfilled in the New, as the Old Testament is fulfilled in Christ, you realize something really really important: it is impossible for us to fulfill this commandment apart from the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus said, "I am the way and the truth and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me." Today we do not see Christ. Today we do not touch him as the disciples did in the days of his Incarnation, but we come in reliance on his righteousness, we come in reliance of his work on the cross on our behalf, and we realize that we need a mediator because there is only one mediator between God and man. This commandment points us to Christ because we cannot worship God rightly on our own.

Look at Philippians 2:9. To give glory to anything created is to violate the second commandment. To worship God in the name of Jesus Christ is to fulfill the second commandment. And look as we read this familiar passage, remember the heaven, earth and seas aspect of the second commandment and look at Philippians 2:9, "For this reason also, God highly exalted Christ, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee will bow, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." Christ alone. Christ alone. Christ alone.

So my friends, I ask you, is your religion based on what you see and on what you can touch? Is it based on your own effort? Based on the efforts of what you can do in your own flesh, and based on your own understanding and on your own feelings? Or is your worship based on biblical truth and the person of Jesus Christ? May the Spirit of God help you forsake your reliance on self so that you may worship God truly through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Let's pray together.

Father, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, we worship You in spirit and truth. We worship You according to whom You know Yourself to be, not according to our limited human understanding, according to the greatness of Your invisible, immortal essence and not according to what we can touch or feel with our hands. Father, help us to forsake our reliance on the flesh, help us to forsake walking by sight and to embrace this wonderful faith in Christ which alone is acceptable worship to You. I pray that You would open eyes and open hearts to see these things in true measure of their great eternal significance. I pray that You would open hearts to repent and believe in Christ, leaving behind the things of the past, leaving behind false religion that we've had given to us in the past, and to embrace Christ by faith, embrace Him tightly, embrace Him fully, embrace Him as our only hope of reconciliation with You. Help us then, Father, to worship You in Christ in spirit and in truth. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

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