

INTRODUCTION

God created the heavens and the earth, just as the Bible says, in six days, and all very good. When, on the sixth day, God created us in Adam, the first man, and Eve, the first woman, He designed and built into us a knowledge of what was right, an intrinsic understanding of His law. We were created with an obligation to worship our creator as He told us to do, which obligation was not a burden, but a blessing. He also gave a simple and generous commandment allowing us to eat almost anything we pleased, but forbidding us to eat from just one certain tree.

The devil tempted the woman, and through her, the man, prompting them to do what they imagined would be good to do, rather than what God commanded them. Those first two, Adam and Eve, transgressed God's law. And, since God designated Adam to represent us, all of us who come from Adam have inherited both the guilt of sin and the corruption of sin. So, we come into this life already sinful; then we start sinning ourselves, piling up guilt upon guilt. By nature, we are children of wrath, deserving of all punishment from God for our sins against Him, from the day Adam ate the forbidden fruit until now.

But God always had planned for this, to uphold His justice even as He shows us His mercy; even us who had despised His way and gone our own way. God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son. Jesus Christ came into this world as the only man not guilty of the sin of Adam, and not corrupted by it. He lived the obedient life that Adam and that we had not. When He was tempted by the devil, instead of breaking God's law, He quoted God's law. When He was tempted to go His own way instead of God's way, He prayed, "Not my will, but Yours, be done." Then He, Jesus Christ, who knew no sin, became sin for us. In our stead, for our sake, He suffered cruel tortures, and died nailed to the cross, bearing our sin. He was buried. Then, on the third day, being the first day of the week, He rose again from the dead. Now, He commands all men everywhere to repent, turning from their wicked deeds to obey God; and He promises that all who repent will be forgiven. He proclaims that whoever believes in Him will not perish in the fires of hell, but will have everlasting life with Him in heaven.

He commands that all who so repent and believe be baptized, and be taught to observe all His commands. His commands all can be summarized in one word: love; love toward God, and love toward our fellow men, especially toward those who are Jesus' disciples as we are. But that love needs further explaining.

That love which Jesus commands us is explained in the whole Bible. But the primary exposition of it is found in The Ten Commandments. Jesus and His apostles referred to The Ten Commandments many times as they preached and taught. So we return to The Ten Commandments many times, to know what the will of God is, to know what it is to love Him and to love other people.

In hearing The Ten Commandments, sin remaining in our flesh will be exposed to our consciences. We will be able to repent of that sin, and put it to death, to mortify it. God will be pruning us like a gardener does his plants. We will be further sanctified. We will be made more and more like our dear Savior and Lord, Jesus Christ.

A few weeks ago, I preached to you about understanding The Ten Commandments in general:

That they are to be obeyed. We are to hear them, and to do what they say, knowing that they are the word of God, who is the highest authority over us.

That they do not teach us to try to obey them better in order to get to heaven. Instead, they teach us to despair of that as futile, so we will seek salvation not through the righteousness of our own works, but through faith in Jesus Christ our righteousness.

That they are the law that God spoke with His own voice, and wrote in stone with His own finger. The Ten Commandments are not ceremonial or civil law, but are moral law---not the kind of law that was just for Israel, and that expired with the end of the Old Covenant, but the kind of law that our Lord's apostles cited as applying to everyone.

In the past few sermons, I have spoken to you about the first commandment, which forbids us worshiping anything else but the one true and living God; which requires that we give what is due God only to Him, and not to any creature.

Today we proceed to the second commandment. Hopefully we will learn to submit ourselves to this commandment by studying it from several angles in the scriptures. But let me summarize it to you right up front with this:

In the second commandment, God forbids us trying to worship Him by any means other than what He has not commanded.

TEXT

Exodus 20:4-6 Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: (5) Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me; (6) And shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments.

In the second commandment, God forbids us trying to worship Him by any means other than what He has not commanded.

BODY

Learn the second commandment with me by considering

- I. Its Place Among the First Four Commandments
 - A. All the first four commandments are about love for God; they teach us and require us to love God with the all the heart, mind, soul, and strength
 - B. Each of the first four commandments deals with some aspect of that love for God in terms of how we are to worship God
 1. First: the object of worship
 2. Second: the means of worship
 - a) means of worship...way and means...ordinances
 3. Third: the manner of worship
 4. Fourth: the time of worship
 5. How exactly this is stated varies through the Puritan literature I have referenced. As far as I have seen, using these four terms just like this comes from Thomas Vincent: *Shorter Catechism Explained from Scripture*, 1674
 - C. There is a distinction between what the first commandment tells us and what the second commandment tells us
 1. First - that God only is to be worshiped, not any false gods, which often are worshiped by making idols; but anything worshiped instead of God is an idol, even if not a proper carved statue idol
 2. Second - that God is not to be worshiped by use of any kind of statue, painting, etc.
 3. The Roman Catholic position...
 4. We are not to worship any false gods, as many people do when they make idols; but we also are not to worship the true God by making idols
 5. Idols
 - a) first commandment: do not worship anything else as god, making that thing an idol
 - b) second commandment: do not worship God by making any image of him, making that thing an idol

Learn the second commandment by considering
-its place among the first four commandments; and

II. The Truth Upon Which It Is Based - John 4:24

- A. God is a spirit - John 4:24 God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.
- B. Jesus stood there in Samaria that day, speaking as God in the flesh; the one person who is both God and man;
 - 1. clearly His incarnation had not changed the fact that God is a Spirit
 - 2. the Son of God joining the divine nature to human nature did not change the fact that the divine nature is spiritual, and so must be worshipped in spirit
- C. It is impossible to worship God by means of looking at some created thing made to represent Him
 - 1. the thing is not spiritual
 - 2. the thing is not a true representation

Learn the second commandment by considering
-its place among the first four commandments;
-the truth upon which it is based; and

III. God's Warning to Israel About This - Deuteronomy 12:29-32

- A. Deuteronomy 12:29-32 When the LORD thy God shall cut off the nations from before thee, whither thou goest to possess them, and thou succeedest them, and dwellest in their land; (30) Take heed to thyself that thou be not snared by following them, after that they be destroyed from before thee; and that thou enquire not after their gods, saying, How did these nations serve their gods? even so will I do likewise. (31) Thou shalt not do so unto the LORD thy God: for every abomination to the LORD, which he hateth, have they done unto their gods; for even their sons and their daughters they have burnt in the fire to their gods. (32) What thing soever I command you, observe to do it: thou shalt not add thereto, nor diminish from it.
- B. Watch out for a trap, a snare that the devil has laid before you
- C. To know how to worship God, do not look anywhere besides the word of God (v. 30b)
- D. Do not try to worship God by any of the means that men have invented (v. 31a)
1. it is not easy to see how wicked this is by looking at some of the more benign things men have invented to do in worship
 2. but it is very easy to see how wicked this is by looking at some of the worst things men have invented to do in worship (v. 31b)
- E. Worship God by doing whatever He has commanded you (v. 32a)
- F. Do not add to God's worship anything He has not commanded (v. 32b)
- G. Do not leave out from God's worship anything He has commanded (v. 32c)

CONCLUSION

Learn the second commandment by considering

- its place among the first four commandments;
- the truth upon which it is based;
- God's warning to Israel about this

Exodus 20:4-6 Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: 5 Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them...

Stephen - Call to Worship and Opening Prayer - Psalm 84

Andrew - Scripture Reading - Psalm 119:89-96

Dillon - Congregational Prayer

~~Audrey - Prelude "Lead On, O King Eternal"~~

~~Bella - Trinity 302 "Lord of the Worlds Above"~~

Haven - Prelude - whichever song you want to play

Journey - Trinity 677 "Nothing But the Blood of Jesus"

Journey - Trinity 109 "This Is My Father's World"

Haven - Trinity 186 "When I Survey the Wondrous Cross"

1 John 5:19-21 And we know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness. 20 And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life. 21 Little children, keep yourselves from idols. Amen.

IV. A New Version of An Old Illustration

- A. There is an old illustration in some of the Puritan-era expositions of The Ten Commandments. I first heard a form of this illustration from brother Jarrett Downs in one of the other congregations in our association; I came up with a new version of the same thing to tell you, to help you understand the second commandment
- B. What if a wife snapped a picture of her husband with her phone, and set it as the backdrop on the home screen
- C. But what if, when her husband is right in the room with her, she gave all her attention to that picture on her phone rather than to her husband himself?
 - 1. if her expressions of affection were all to his picture on her phone
 - a) “I love you”
 - b) hug
 - c) kiss
 - 2. if she ignored what he said to her, and made up things that his picture was saying
- D. What if she did this because it was easier for her to deal with the picture than to deal with her husband
 - 1. it doesn't say anything she disagrees with
 - 2. she doesn't have to concentrate to understand what it is saying
 - 3. it doesn't tell her to do anything, requiring her to submit
 - 4. she can pick it up and look at it any time she wants to, and put it away whenever she doesn't want to
 - 5. she can put it on silent or “do not disturb”
- E. Think how offensive to the husband, for the wife to ignore him in favor of a picture of him!
- F. Note how obviously wrong this is, even though the picture is a picture of her own husband.

G. Use this illustration to inform your conscience regarding what it is like for us to try to deal with God by making something to look at, to represent Him, rather than dealing with God Himself as He really is