

The One True God Must Be #1 In All (Exodus 20:3)

Our unchangeable God is God alone and He is on His throne. He doesn't depend on or need us.

- I also love that song the Law of God is good. It shows we're not good, always need Jesus.
- Jesus loved a proud young man and used the 10 commandments to show he wasn't good.

Last week we introduced the law and the gospel. We saw the law

- warns the proud, convicts the guilty; but in believers, law can revive hearts, homes.¹

In some sense of law Paul says we're not under it (ex: law's curse or condemnation,

- not a code to save, not circumcision or ceremonies Jesus fulfills),
- but in another sense, Rom 7:12: *'the law is holy, and the commandment is holy and righteous and good...'*²⁵ *Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, I myself serve the law of God...'*

So we are to serve the law of God through Jesus with gratitude. The law is good

Paul in 1 Cor 9:21 says he's not under the law like Jews,

- but clarifies he's *'not outside the law of God, but under the law of Christ...'*
- Other translations say we're not above the law, or without law, not free from God's law.²
- Don't think kosher law, think Christ's law. NKJV *'under law toward Christ...'*
- Think of 10 commandments as done toward Christ, law as interpreted by Christ.

We can think also of the 3-fold use of the law that came out of the Reformation³

Last week in James 1:25 we saw blessing if we intently study God's law and abide by it, unlike a guy seeing his face in the mirror, it shows what's wrong, but he goes away and does nothing.

- **1st use of law:** shows God's character and our sin (mirror shows what's off, but can't fix)
- This AM some of you saw issues with hair or teeth, but the mirror isn't a comb or floss
Law can't save but we sang law *'shows us the way ... imparts, the knowledge of our sinful hearts, that we may see our lost estate and seek deliverance ere too late.'*⁴
- The Law, the Decalogue is a guardian/tutor meant to lead us to Christ to save (Gal. 3-4).

2nd use of law: restrains greater sin. Paul says in 1 Tim 1:8 *'we know that the law is good, if one uses it lawfully, ⁹ understanding this, that the law is not laid down for the just but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and sinners, for the unholy and profane, for those who strike their fathers and mothers, for murderers, ¹⁰ the sexually immoral, men who practice homosexuality, enslavers [lit. man-stealing], liars, perjurers [10 commandments #5-9 in order], and whatever else is contrary to sound doctrine [all the rest]...*

So Paul says the law is good and then he goes through the 2nd table of the 10 commandments.

*So we sang 'The law of God is good and wise, it sets His will before our eyes
[but] ... When men the offered help disdain and willfully in sin remain,*

Law's terror in their ear resounds and keeps their wickedness in bounds.' [like law enforcement in Rom 13]

3rd use of law: teaches believers how to live pleasing God. I think Mt 5 shows Jesus doing that. It's good to keep those 3 uses of the law in mind as we study these 10 commandments together.

*To those who help in Christ have found and would in works of love abound,
Law shows what deeds are His delight and should be done as good and right.*

Rom 7:22 *I delight in the law of God, in my inner being [or joyfully concur with the Law]... NT echoes Ps 119*

- v. 72 *The law of your mouth is better to me than thousands of gold...pieces* [good for 'gold country'].
- v. 92 is good for suffering: *If your law had not been my delight, I would have perished in my affliction.*
- Ps 119:97 let's pray this series will help us say: *Oh how I love your law! It is my meditation all the day.*

Let's pray. Father we pray with Ps 119 *Open our eyes, that we may behold wondrous things out of your law...Put false ways far from us and graciously teach us your law!...Give us understanding, that we may keep your law and observe it with our whole heart* [v. 18, 29, 34]. We pray in and through Christ for His sake.

'Dearly Beloved. We have come together in the presence of God...'

- What does that make you think of? It's how traditional weddings start.
- It's a covenant ceremony, 'forsaking all others, be faithful to him...'

Please turn to Ex 20 where we see a covenant ceremony.

- It's for God's dearly beloved who have come together in God's presence.
- Ex 19 calls them His treasured possession, His special people to love and to cherish.
- They're the apple of His eye, Moses later writes,

Jeremiah says in the wilderness Israel was the Lord's bride and He was their covenant husband⁵

In Ex 19 the witnesses say "I will," when they hear God's covenant commitments.

- Israel vows to be faithful from this day forward.
- God is jealous for His own and will allow no other before Him or alongside Him.
- There can be no one or thing we love and honor and cherish like Him.

Imagine a wife bringing another man before her husband and saying 'I've got another love, but I still love you alongside him, I just love him, too.' No way! It's exclusive, forsaking all others!

Ex 20:3 is what our covenant God says in relationship to us: *You shall have no other gods before me.*

A detailed study on v. 3 says 'The Hebrew formula... "do not have" means to keep or refrain from having a relationship with... formulaic expression for the unique covenant relationship between God and Israel, as the terminology for marriage became the classical terminology for Israel's covenant relationship with God. The most intimate of all relationships on the human plane became the analogy for God's intimate relationship with His people. This commandment implies that there may be no third parties... have no relationship of any kind with other gods.'⁶

'You shall have no other' means don't let any other have you, no love above God alone

Main point: there is only one true God and He must be #1 in all, in your heart, soul, and mind.

This is the first of the 10 commandments, God's gracious loving law for His covenant people.

- We'll see it in the context of old covenant Israel, in Christ's words, and in culture today.

Ephesians says we're '*in the beloved,*' we're '*dearly loved... as Christ loved the church and... nourishes and cherishes...*'⁷

- No one can put asunder a believers' union to Christ. Death will not part His love for us.
- That's what a marriage covenant pictures and the Mosaic covenant pictures

Outline:

- 1. The context for Israelites**
- 2. The commentary by Christ**
- 3. Our culture and our life**

First the immediate context of the verse right before. Look down at v. 2: *I am the LORD your God...* This is covenantal relationship language, I'm yours, implication: I brought you out to be mine. v. 2 says He redeemed them out of Egypt, and He said in ch 19 He lovingly carried them as His.

Listen to Isa 43: *O Israel: “Fear not, for **I have redeemed you**; I have called you by name, **you are mine**.² When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you; when you walk through fire you shall not be burned, and the flame shall not consume you.³ For **I am the LORD your God** [same exact phrase as Ex 20:2, that’s what all that means, He goes on] ... I give Egypt as your ransom [i.e., I made them pay, not you, why?] ... Because you are precious in my eyes, and honored, and I love you ...”*

That’s who says ‘*you shall have no other gods before me.*’ Isa 43:10 goes on to apply that first commandment: *Before me no god was formed, nor shall there be any after me.¹¹ I, I am the LORD, and besides me there is no savior.*’ 45:22 *“Turn to me and be saved, all the ends of the earth! For **I am God, and there is no other.**”*

- That refutes another god like Allah. That rules out polytheism (multiple gods) like Mormonism.
- It rebukes Jehovah’s Witnesses saying Jesus is ‘a god’ in Jn 1:1.
- Besides Jehovah there can be no god, and besides Him is no Savior.

We saw last time Jesus is the Savior, so He is Jehovah or Yahweh. Jesus says *I am* and He is *the Lord your God*

Moses used that phrase from v. 2 ‘the Lord your God’ at the edge of the promised land, to recall ‘*all of which **the LORD your God** did for you in Egypt before your eyes...that you might know that the LORD is God; **there is no other besides him**...And because **he loved**... and brought you out of Egypt... **lay it to your heart, that the LORD is God...there is no other**’ (Dt 4:34-39). Another verse in Isaiah, 48:17 ‘*This is what the LORD says—**your Redeemer**... “**I am the LORD your God, who teaches you what is best for you, who directs you in the way you should go**’ (NIV). That’s who says the same in Ex 20:2, and v. 3 is for our good, to give the best.**

Ps 81:10 ***I am the LORD your God, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt** [another echo of Ex 20:2 and here’s how the psalm applies it]. *Open your mouth wide, and I will fill it.* God alone is sufficient to satisfy man.*

Before the 10 commandments were 10 plagues on Egypt, against false gods of Egypt

What about the context of the verses right after?

- v. 3 is the foundation, v. 4-6 more explanation.
- The 2nd commandment in v. 4-6 says God is jealous of idols,
 - o v. 3 is God will have no rival.
- The 2nd commandment for next week forbids a graven statue,
 - o the 1st forbids a greater substitute.

God’s 10 words to Israel begin the way His Word begins in Gen 1:1 ‘*In the beginning God...*’

- There was nothing before God created. He says here ‘*You shall have no other gods before me*’
- Nothing created is to come before the Creator in our appreciation, affection, or allegiance
- Notice v. 4 forbids images in the likeness of creation, heaven, earth, waters (Gen 1 terms)
- Creation also shows how majestic is His name in all the earth, so honor His name (v. 7)
- Why is Israel to rest after a week of work? v. 11, because God did that in creation week
- Adam & Eve were to be fruitful and multiply kids, have authority, basis for 5th command
- Next command not to murder is also based on Gen 1, human life is made in God’s image
- *You shall not commit adultery* also violates creation order: 2 become 1 flesh, covenant union
- Command #8 not to take what’s not yours is also rooted in Gen 1-2, the forbidden fruit
- #9-10 was in the garden, false witness of God’s character, Adam and Eve covet and fall
- In Gen 1 God speaks 10x (*let there be*), now He speaks 10x on what we must never let be
- Since creation men suppress what they know of God, moral law on conscience (Rom 1-2)
- There will be a new creation, but the 1st command shows we need that in our heart first

You shall have no other gods before me – that starts in the heart

[Now go to Mk 12 and let’s go from the context for Israelites to #2. The commentary by Christ](#)

The 10 commandments point back to creation, and they also point forward to Christ for sinners. Israel would fail in the wilderness and have other gods beside Yahweh, Jesus in the wilderness: *'You shall worship the Lord your God and him only shall you serve.'* Jesus didn't fail, He fulfilled it for sinners

Mk 12:28 *And one of the scribes came up and heard them disputing with one another, and seeing that he answered them well, asked him, "Which commandment is the most important of all?"* ²⁹ Jesus answered, "The most important is, 'Hear, O Israel: **The Lord our God, the Lord is one.**' ³⁰ *And 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.'* ³¹ *The second is this: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.'* *There is no other commandment greater than these.* ³² *And the scribe said to him, "You are right, Teacher. You have truly said that he is one, and there is no other besides him."* ³³ *And to love him with all the heart and with all the understanding and with all the strength, and to love one's neighbor as oneself, is much more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices."* ³⁴ *And when Jesus saw that he answered wisely, he said to him, "You are not far from the kingdom of God." ...*

- Matthew's gospel adds He said the whole law depends on those 2 commands (10 commandment tablets)
- Some translations say 'first' commandment. It starts with God is one then love Him as #1 by all you are
- Another way to say 'no other gods before me,' the one true God must be #1 in heart, soul, mind, strength
- Jesus quotes the law and gives commentary on the 1st of the 10, God must have first place in everything
- The scribe got it, 'there is no other besides him,' so the first foremost commandment is loving that way

Now go to Mt 10. Nothing before the one true God depends on having no love before Him as #1 Do you love God with all your heart and all you are all the time? Or is another love before God? Mt 10:37 *Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me, and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me.* ³⁸ *And whoever does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me.*

To follow Jesus, He must be the #1 love in your life, far above all other human relationships. It takes self-denying cross-taking forsaking all others, like Ex 20:3: putting no other before Jesus.

Col. 1 says Jesus 'is before all things...to have first place in everything' (v. 17-18 NASB)

MAVIS HEINLEIN BIBLE PICTURE – J.O.Y. of Lord is strength (Jesus #1, Others, You).

An early church father Augustine said 'He loves not Christ at all, that loves Him not above all.'⁸

- The 1st commandment says God must have first place in all
 - o and He's before all and there's none before Him.
 - o Jesus is God and says He must have 1st place in our love and everything.
 - o Not Jesus 1st, spouse 2nd, kids 3rd, work 4th, etc.
 - o 'First place in everything' means He's #1 in all. Go to ch 6.

#1 in our family, work, etc., 'Thou and Thou only first in my heart...my treasure Thou art'⁹

6:33 *But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.* [what things? v. 31 is about the needs and things of this world. In everything of life we're to seek first His kingdom, seek Him as first place, keep the King #1. v. 21] *for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also...* ²⁴ *"No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve **God and wealth.**"* ²⁵ *"For this reason I say to you, do not be worried about your life*

...
That takes us to #3. our culture and life. Jesus contrasts

- seeking first God (put no gods before Him) with seeking first our worries.
- Jesus places serving God on the same level with how some serve wealth.
- American money says 'in God we trust' on it, for many, money is god they trust.

Job: *'If I have put my trust in gold or said... "You are my security," ...[it] would be sins to be judged'* (31:24-28)

Key word: security, trust, instead of in God we trust and find security

So a god can be wealth or work or wine or worry if that's what consumes or controls you.

- Your god is whatever you serve that masters you, what you live for.
- Jesus said what you're devoted to, love, treasure, it's where your heart is.
- It's addictions, supreme affections, or the answer to the question what do you seek first?
- If it's not His kingdom, if He's not King above all you've put another before Him.
- What do you put before God? (screens, social media, sports, self?)
- What do you most prize or prioritize? Family or food can be a god
- Paul said of some *'their god is their belly...with minds set on earthly things'* and *'such men are slaves, not of our Lord Christ but of their own appetites'* (Phil 3:19 ESV, Rom 16:18 NAS). Another translation *'they think only about this life here on earth...serving their own personal interests'*¹⁰

What does it look like to obey the 1st commandment? Ps 73:25 *'there is nothing on earth I desire besides you.'*

It's not living for earthly things, fleshly appetites,

- affections, and desires besides or before God.

Your god is what defines you or drives you in life

- or dominates your heart, soul, mind, strength.

Hab 1:11: *...they are deeply guilty, for their own strength is their god...*¹⁶ *Then they will worship their nets and ...they will claim... "These nets are the gods who have made us rich!"* (NLT).

- Men worship what they do and what they have, praise it, sacrifice family for it, etc.
- The commandment is love God with all you are and all your strength,
 - o but some trust strength as their god and are guilty of 1st command.

We're all guilty of not keeping the 1 true God as #1, too often self is #1

Thomas Watson, 10 Commandments: 'to trust in anything more than God is to make it a god.'¹¹

The wife of C.S. Lewis said gods put before God today are sex, the State, science, and society.¹²

- Sex outside marriage in our culture has many gods or goddesses people give offerings to
- The State wants the church to bow to it (see the movie in theaters now, Essential Church)
- Science makes evolution a god before everything, bringing everything to be, just believe
- Society's social justice literally calls you to bow, say certain words, sing praise to LGBT

God has a place for sex, the state, science and society, but they can never take the place of God!

- A good can become a god. What do I live for? What do you think you can't live without?

Luther's Larger Catechism on the 1st commandment: 'A god means that from which we are to expect all good and to which we are to take refuge in ... upon which you set your heart and ... cleave to or rest in ... to have a god is to have something in which the heart entirely trusts.'¹³

Beautiful Eulogy: We seek pleasure in anything, overestimate everything, endlessly trusting in empty entities
 ... When a good God gives good gifts we generally tend to twist the list
 And take the list of good gifts and ... make general "gods" out of gifts

I suppose what exposes the worship in most of us Is a close look at most of our thoughts, fears, and emotions
 ... I prefer the immediate, And exchange the true God for what seems more expedient

Help us not see greater value in the gifts You give And not become distracted from their intended desires
 May we regard the world and all that is in it As nothing compared to the satisfaction of knowing Our Messiah¹⁴

That's Christ's sufficiency and supremacy in our life when He's #1. God help us seek Him first.

If He's to have first place in everything, let's give Him the first place of our day in His Word.

- Make the first day of the week, the Lord's Day, a priority to be here to put Him first
- Put Him first tomorrow morning, read your Bible first thing each day of the week
- Put away technology as much as possible as that's become a god we put before God
- Then and during the day, as things come up, turn to the Lord first in prayer, ask for help
- We all fail to obey the 1st commandment, ask Him to forgive you in His unfailing love
- Ask Him to show you where someone or something has misplaced Him in ruling you
- Repent and ask His help to let nothing be a god in your life before Him as your #1 love
- If your heart like mine is distracted or divided, pray *unite my heart to fear your name*, Ps 86:11

¹ - the law convicts of guilt, need (James 2:10, Gal. 3:10-14)
 - believers study God's law for blessing (James 1:25, Psalm 1:2, etc.)
 - the law gives warnings (Proverbs 28:9, 1 Peter 3:7)
 - the law for a sanctified home (Pr 31:26, Ps 78:5)
 - the law can revive hearts (Ps 19:7, 119:18, 29, 34)

² Compare NASB and NIV and NLT (part dynamic equivalence, part paraphrase): *When I was with the Jews, I lived like a Jew to bring the Jews to Christ. When I was with those who follow the Jewish law, I too lived under that law. Even though I am not subject to the law, I did this so I could bring to Christ those who are under the law.* ²¹ *When I am with the Gentiles who do not follow the Jewish law, I too live apart from that law so I can bring them to Christ. But I do not ignore the law of God; I obey the law of Christ.*

³ [The Threefold Use of the Law \(ligonier.org\)](http://ligonier.org)

⁴ Matthias Liroy, "The Law of God is Good and Wise."

⁵ Compare Exodus 19:4-6 with Deuteronomy 32:10-11. Jeremiah speaks of the time of Israel's wilderness as "the devotion of your youth, your love as a bride" (2:2) and God says "I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, my covenant that they broke, though I was their husband" (31:32).

⁶ Mark F. Rooker, *The Ten Commandments: Ethics for the Twenty-First Century*, NAC Studies in Bible & Theology (B&H, 2010), chapter 1.

⁷ Ephesians 1:6 ESV, 5:1, 25, 29 NIV84.

⁸ As quoted by Benjamin Keach in "True Godliness Described," *Free Grace Broadcaster* (Summer 2005), p. 3.

⁹ "Be Thou My Vision."

¹⁰ New Living Translation.

¹¹ Thomas Watson, *The Ten Commandments* (1692; repr. Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1965), 55.

¹² As quoted by Al Mohler, sermon on the 10 commandments at Southern Seminary (also in his book *Words from the Fire*).

¹³ <https://bookofconcord.org/large-catechism/#lc-i-0001>

¹⁴ Beautiful Eulogy, "Messiah."