

# TEN: Free to Obey

## A Christian Looks at the Ten Commandments

### ONLY WORSHIP GOD!

Exodus 20:4-6, Matthew 4:8-10

INTRODUCTION: For those of you that were not here last Sunday and for those of you that were here but your memory does not last for a full seven days, let me tell you we started a new study last week. We are looking at the Ten Commandments from a Christian perspective.

As followers of Christ, the Scriptures tell us that we are not under law but under grace. We saw last week that while the Old Covenant Law, of which the Ten Commandments are a part, was declared null and void by God in the days of Jeremiah because of Israel's disobedience, Jesus refused to allow the words of that law to fall away. Jesus said,

Matthew 5:17-18 17 "Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill. 18 For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled.

Therefore,

- While the Old Covenant of the Law has been replaced by the New Covenant established by Jesus' shed blood, and
- While Christians are not required to keep the Old Testament Law as the Jews once were,
- Still the Law has value and validity for the follower of Christ

BECAUSE

- The O.T. Law (and most especially the Ten Commandments) reveals the character of God.
- The Ten Commandments also reveal ways that we can reflect the character of God in the way we live day by day.
- Furthermore, the Ten Commandments take on a special importance when we understand that the Scriptures declare that it was the Second Person of the Trinity, the Son of God Himself, who gave these commandments on Mt. Sinai.

Now, if there is any of that you do not understand, or if you are wondering where in the Bible does it tell us those things, then go to our website and listen or read the message I preached last Sunday.

From these principles of God's Word, I shared with you three questions we will ask of each of the Ten Commandments to help us identify the specific ways God would speak to us as followers of Christ from these ancient words.

- 1. What does this commandment reveal about God?**
- 2. How does God want this portion of His character to show in our lives?**
- 3. What does the New Testament say that helps us understand this commandment better or how to live it out day to day?**

Last Sunday, we began with the first of the Ten Commandments.

Exodus 20:2-3 NKJV "I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. You shall have no other gods before Me."

- 1. What does the FIRST COMMANDMENT reveal about God?**

- That the eternal God who never changes,

The Creator God who made the universe and all that is in it,

The Redeemer God, specifically the Lord Jesus Christ Himself

- That this One and Only God wants NOTHING to come before Him in our lives.

The second commandment is built upon the first.

Exodus 20:4-6 NKJV 4 "You shall not make for yourself a carved image—any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth;

5 you shall not bow down to them nor serve them.

For I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generations of those who hate Me, 6 but showing mercy to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments.

- 1. What does the SECOND COMMANDMENT reveal about God?**

- God knows that people are prone to worship the tangible in place of the invisible.

- While Moses was still up on Mt. Sinai receiving the law from God, the people who only months before had been rescued by God from slavery and brought miraculously across the Red Sea, began to worship an idol they made in the form of a golden calf!
- And sadly, the worship of idols and false gods like all the other peoples living around them became the story of their lives and ultimately sent the nation into captivity.
- **The command is not a prohibition of all art work.**
  - It is a prohibition or making something to bow down to or to serve, which is the essence of the meaning of worship.
  - How do we know for sure that making images of any kind for any purpose is not prohibited?
    - Because God Himself commanded Moses to make an image.
    - When the people of Israel complained about the manna God gave them daily for food, God sent snakes among them whose poison felt like fire running through their veins before at last it killed them.
    - When the people cried out in repentance,
- Numbers 21:8 NKJV Then the LORD said to Moses, “Make a fiery serpent, and set it on a pole; and it shall be that everyone who is bitten, when he looks at it, shall live.”
  - This image of a serpent provided a way for the people to demonstrate their faith in God’s provision. If they would believe God and look upon it, they would be healed and live.
  - They were not to worship the image nor serve it. They merely looked as an act of faith that they believed what God had said.
- **God is a jealous God.** We saw this demonstrated in the first commandment, but we see it spoken specifically here in the second.
  - God is jealous, not because He needs to protect His turf.
  - He does not want people to displace Him and follow or worship someone or something else because He does not want them separated from Himself for eternity.
  - **This sin is especially contagious to our children.** You who are without Christ may think, “I will live my own way and take the consequences.” Think of your children!

Exodus 20:5–6 NKJV ... For I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generations of those who hate Me, but showing mercy to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments.

- Sometimes people just glancing at this verse respond by saying, “That’s not fair.” God should not punish the children for what their parents did.
  - Folks, let me tell you something that would be good to keep in the front pocket of your mind where you can reach it quickly.
  - Whenever something prompts you to say, “God’s not fair,” that means you do not know the whole story.
  - God is better than fair. He is just, and justice is always more righteous than being fair.
  - But not only is God always just, He is overflowing with mercy. And God allows mercy to flow to show kindness where justice would rightly bring pain.
  - Just write it down on one of those little post it notes and stick it to the front of your mind, “God is better than fair; He is just and merciful.”
  - When you are tempted to say, or even think, “God is not fair,” pull out your note and read it and believe it. It is true!
- Let me show you in this case how true it is. You need to read the fine print. You see, every word of the Scripture is breathed by God. None of His words are superfluous. Read the Scripture again.

Exodus 20:5–6 NKJV ... For I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generations of those who hate Me, but showing mercy to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments.

- So here is the situation:
  - The father is an idolater, worshipping an idol instead of the God who made him.
  - His children and grandchildren hate God.
  - We do not know why they hate God, but the fact that they hate Him tells us they do not trust Him. They are not saved.
  - For no one who trusts in God hates God.

- So God visits the iniquity of their sin of unbelief upon the children and grandchildren, which is the same sin as their father and grandfather had.
- But they are punished, not for being the children or grandchildren of an idolater, but because they themselves reject God and refuse to trust Him.
- The problem is not that God is not fair. He is more than fair. He is just and merciful.”
  - Come back to the children and grandchildren.
  - Even though their father or grandfather was an idolater, God desires to show the mercy.

**Exodus 34:6–7 NKJV** ... “The LORD, the LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abounding in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, ...”

And

**Leviticus 26:40–42 NKJV** ‘But if they confess their iniquity and the iniquity of their fathers, ... if their uncircumcised hearts are humbled, and they accept their guilt—then ... My covenant with Abraham I will remember; ...’

- If the children or grandchildren will repent and turn to the Lord in humility, trusting Him, they will be shown mercy and forgiven of their sin. God is more than fair; He is just and merciful!
- Come with me back to the main point here. **The sin of idolatry is very contagious, especially to our children and family.**
  - Men, ladies, if we ourselves are led astray into idolatry, we not only risk our own eternal destiny,
  - We are leading those we love the most down the most dangerous of paths.
  - No, they will not be condemned for our sin. But if they adopt our rebellion against God and will not trust Him, our influence will be at least in part responsible for encouraging a disastrous choice they make to reject God.

Let us move to the second question:

## 2. How does God want this portion of His character to show in our lives?

- **We honor God as the One True God by refusing to make or bow down or serve anything else.**
  - Most of us here would say, “Well I’m good with that. You won’t find any idols in my place.”

- I certainly hope that is true.
- But let me suggest some idols often found among people today that lead them to unthinkingly offend the character of our God who is jealous.
  - ❖ In some religions calling themselves Christian, members are taught to pray to Mary, the earthly mother of Jesus. Prayer is certainly one way to bow down to someone or something.
  - ❖ Others bow before a statue of Mary or others of the saints. This is in direct disobedience to the command to not bow before any image.
  - ❖ Some folks have some type of good luck charm. When they want something to especially go their way, they want to hold it, or rub it, or kiss it. They are serving their good luck charm, something made by themselves or another.
  - ❖ Some pray to or converse with a dead parent, sibling, or friend, seeking from them comfort, advice, or their intercession on our behalf. This is not only idolatry but what the Bible calls necromancy, contacting the dead. This is especially dangerous, because if a person is ever successful, he is not actually talking to a deceased friend or relative but to a demon who is impersonating the person being contacted so as to lead the unsuspecting into spiritual disaster.

### **3. What does the New Testament say that helps us understand this commandment better or how to live it out day to day?**

If you think the short list of modern idols I offered was narrow-minded, wait until you hear the words of Jesus. He warned us about mankind's most common false god.

**Matthew 6:24 NKJV** “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.

- **Jesus warned us to the idol of Mammon which means riches or wealth.**

Jesus said we cannot serve both God and money.

Immediately, many of us think about rich people we know.

Guess what? According to the Global Rich List, most of us in this room are among the top 1% of wealthiest people in the world.

If your income is at the federal poverty level in the United States, you are still in the top 15% of the wealthiest people in the world.

Now understand, the Bible does not condemn having money. But it speaks strongly against pursuing money. And Jesus says it is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.

So that is a warning to all of us Americans, who are the richest in the world that we better be careful that we serve only God, not money.

**1 Timothy 6:17 NKJV** Command those who are rich in this present age not to be haughty, nor to trust in uncertain riches but in the living God, who gives us richly all things to enjoy.

- **Paul warned us that covetousness, the desire for things we do not have, is idolatry.**

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

So how do we heed these fearsome warnings of letting ourselves fall into the worship of some idol or something other than the Lord our God?

I believe that one of the keys came from the mouth of our Lord Jesus when the devil tried to tempt Jesus to worship him. We read the account in

**Matthew 4:8–10 NKJV** 8 Again, the devil took Him up on an exceedingly high mountain, and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory.

**9** And he said to Him, “All these things I will give You if You will fall down and worship me.”

**10** Then Jesus said to him, “Away with you, Satan! For it is written, ‘**You shall worship the LORD your God, and Him only you shall serve.**’ ”

You shall worship the LORD your God, and Him only you shall serve.

Jesus offers very practical advice here.

**How do we keep ourselves from straying into the worship of modern idols or money?**

- **Worship the Lord our God.**
  - **Serve the Lord.**
1. Worship the Lord our God.
    - This does not just mean go to church. On the other hand no one worships as well alone as they worship with other sincere worshippers.

- It means making worship a priority.
- It means that when we come to worship we actually come to worship, not just visit with friends, not just listen to enjoyable music.
- There are three primary parts to worship.
  - Praising God for who He is.
  - Thanking God for what He has done.
  - Trusting God – committing to faith, repenting over disobedience, expressing our faith and trust in Him.

## 2. Serve the Lord.

- Recognizing He is Master, we are His servants.
- Practicing serving rather than being served.
- Being obedient to serve the way our Lord commands.
  - By actively laboring to make disciples.
  - By consciously being a witness of Jesus.
  - In our Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and the end of the earth.

CONCLUSION: Stand with me and pray.

Are there any idols mentioned today or some the Spirit mentioned to you personally that you have ever bowed down to or served? If so, repent of that now, and in prayer confess your sin to the Lord, and tell Him of your commitment to never, never do that again.

How are you doing in resisting the pursuit of riches so that you do not end up serving mammon? Is repentance needed here? Is a commitment needed to express your heart desire to serve only the Lord?

How is your worship? Do you give a priority to being in worship or does the priority go to ball games, Disney trips, weekend vacations, and just relaxing at home or on the beach? How would Jesus evaluate your desire to worship Him?

When you come to worship, do you give yourself to worshipping? Are you more concerned about the people around you? Do you purposely express praise and thankfulness during singing and praying? Do you express your faith in the Lord and seek to allow your faith to grow while in worship?

How's your service of the One you call the Lord your God? Is your service worthy of God? When you lay your service before the Lord at the Judgement Seat of Christ, will you be glad you could bring so much or will you be sad because in all your years you still brought so little to the Lord?

How is your service as a witness and a disciple maker? Is repentance and a new start needed here?

Wow! The implications of just the first two commandments are so overwhelming they challenge us all.

You shall have no other gods before Me.

You shall not make for yourself a carved image.

You shall not bow down to them nor serve them.