

LD 35; Dt. 4:15-24; John 4:21-26; Worship in the Right Manner I. The Foundation of this Command II. Avoiding False Worship III. Pursuing True Worship

Congregation of our Lord Jesus Christ, one of the struggles that Christians face is that we worship a God who cannot be seen. Although His works can be seen, our God is not currently visible to our eyes. We are sensory being- we like to see, hold and touch things. But to believe in the God who is there but is not seen- that takes faith! As Heb. 11 says, faith is the assurance of things hoped for, and the conviction of things not seen. As we continue our series through the 10 Commandments, we are moving into the 2nd command which deals with right worship. In the first command we considered who we are to worship, today we consider how we are to worship Him. So we will see that we are to worship the One, True God as He has commanded. It is only when we worship Him rightly that He is truly honored and pleased. At issue this morning is what we call the Regulative Principle. What does God-pleasing worship look like? So we consider this theme: Jesus Christ reveals the proper way for us to worship the One, True God.

I. The Foundation of this Command

As we begin, let's start by considering the foundation of this command. The 2nd Commandment is unique because in this command we find sanctions listed for us. As we find in Dt. 5:9- You shall not make for yourself a carved image. You shall not bow down to them or serve them- and then we have this sanction listed for us. For I am the Lord your God- and I am a jealous God who visits iniquity and a merciful God who lavishes love. In some way, the worship of idols both confuses the true worship of God and raises the ire of this one true God as well. In other words, God takes the worship of Him and His name very seriously! If you worship me wrongly, you will taste my fury and wrath! As we also found in Dt. 4:24, for I the Lord am a jealous God and a consuming fire! So you will be under the curse and condemnation of God if you do not worship Him rightly! But this commandment also states, for I show steadfast love to thousands of those who love me and keep my commandment. So the flip side of the coin is this- God is also a loving and gracious God! He promises blessing- loving kindness! If you worship God as He commands, it will go well with you! You will be blessed! As we also found in Dt. 4:20- I will bring you out of slavery and into a good inheritance! All of this is to prove

the point that God takes the worship of Him very seriously- and so should we! It is not a small thing to trifle with- for God is both a jealous God and a merciful God- proving Himself full of vengeance or full of love!

Added to this, we know that God is Spirit as we found in John 4:24. As Spirit, God is spiritual. This means that God is invisible and infinite. God is not a material thing that we can hold and grasp- since He is above all that has been made of substance. But more than that, God is the living and free God! He is beyond all bounds and limits. He cannot be contained or confined in some idol or object. Thus He is free from manipulation as well.

In our OT reading from Dt. 4, we find that when the LORD first revealed Himself to the Israelites, He made a specific point of not using a form to reveal His presence. God could have used any form or symbol He saw fit, but Moses clearly states, you did not see a form on the day that God spoke to you. This is accompanied by a warning- be very careful and watch yourself! Beware lest you act corruptly by making a carved image or using any form or figure in your worship. As Moses continues in Dt. 4:19, beware lest you be led astray by them.

There is a direct connection between the first and the second command- if you start to stray with the 2nd; you will soon be breaking the 1st! Although you may think that you are worshipping the 1 true God, the fact remains that if you use images to worship the LORD you will soon worship the images instead of the LORD! So remember, when you received the Law you heard a voice but you did not see a form! It is for this reason that all image making is forbidden in worship. God is Spirit and is not able to be contained or represented by an image crafted by man's hand or created by man's imagination. So the application of this first point is this- we have to submit ourselves to God's wisdom and word. We must never try to be smarter than God! If God by way of example and command has made it clear- do not make any image in order to worship me by them- we must avoid the sinful urge to use objects as a way to get to God. Remember, who has that power- who has the right to control worship? Who dictates blessings? Who distributes life? Is man higher than God to tell God what He should approve of- or is man under God to live in submission to His holy desires?

II. Avoiding False Worship

Now that we understand the foundation of why this commandment is so important, we press on to consider how we are to avoid false forms of worship. As we saw last week, the form of idolatry may have changed shape, but that is not to say that we are any less idolatrous today than the Israelites were back then. We may not build golden calves, but we do still struggle with approaching God rightly. Now a graven image or a golden idol were never intended to take the place of the truth God in Israel, rather they were helpers to aid them in worship. But soon those helps or aids take the place of the God they are supposed to direct our attention towards. So it is true, we do not have any idols or statues in our sanctuary- just as a golden calf would be anathema to right worship. But there are ways in which we can construct idols and images in our head as well. We must be careful not to have images in our head either. It is common to view God as if He was some white haired, elderly man sitting in a rocking chair looking down on the business of man. This also is idolatry since it is inventing or twisting God character to fit our ideas. We can even break this command by going through the motions without thought. Dead formalism or ritualistic exterior worship is also a form of false worship. God is not pleased with people just showing up to pretend that they are worshipping him. So even if you have the right exterior actions, you can be living in rebellion to the heart of this command. Another way in which we can break this command is by having or inventing way of worship that are of our own making. In other words, not everything that is called worship is actually pleasing to God! There are many things that have taken place inside a church building that is not pleasing to God. To prove this point, consider the actions of Nadab and Abihu in Lev. 10. They were at the right place- serving at the temple. They were doing the right thing- presenting and offering of incense. But they did it in the wrong way- with strange fire- and they were burned up by the wrath of God. So we are not free to come up with our own ideas of how to worship the One, True God. As we learn from the sin of Jeroboam. Remember that King Jeroboam did not want the Israelites to go back to Jerusalem- to the temple to worship God. So he set up golden calves in Dan and Bethel to keep his subjects from going south. This was the root sin that led to the idolatry which was rampant in the Northern tribes. So it matters how and with whom you worship. The devil continues to try to keep God's people from worshipping together and receiving the means of grace even this day. So we are not free to add things to our

worship services- nor are we free to forsake the means of grace since we are dealing with God and His worship. Any pictures of God or any human invention in worship is to be rejected. Even in our church education as well, pictures of God do not have a place. We do not want to watch videos that portray God in visible form as these will lead only to idolatry. Viewing pictures or movies that contain images made to represent God will only plant a dangerous seed in your mind- these also are false images to be avoided as QA 98 makes clear. When the Law was received, Israel saw no image. So we must not make or have any images of God either.

III. Pursuing True Worship

Now that we have considered what we are to avoid, in our last point we consider what we are to pursue. Having learned that idols and images only serve to distract and lead us away from God, we will rather desire right and true means to worship the One, True God. Not only avoiding all additions and man- made manipulations of worship, we will see the simply and spiritual worship that God demands and is pleased with. So in summary, we are to worship God rightly. How do we know what God is like? How do we know what kind of worship God is pleased with? The answer is this- His Word tells us. As QA 98 says, God wants us to be instructed by the preaching of His word. Or again in QA 96, we are to worship as He commands in His Word. So the Bible is to be our guide- if we want to know what God is like, we will read His Word. If we want to know what kind of worship He desires; we will read His word. Our second text from John 4 builds on this by revealing that God desires that we worship Him in Spirit and in Truth. To worship God rightly- our worship needs to be spiritual. In other words, it must come from our souls- to be springing forth from our hearts. So our souls must be engaged. Spiritual worship is also worship that the Holy Spirit is active in. This means that only those who have the Holy Spirit living within their hearts will have the ability to worship God rightly. Added to this, the only acceptable worship is worship offered in truth. Man cannot worship God according to his own desire and plans- it must be in truth. To be truthful worship, as we have seen, our worship must be in accordance with God's Word. His Word is truth as Jesus says in John 17. So when we put all these pieces

together, we find that God honoring and acceptable worship must be offered in Spirit and in Truth. The soul and the mind of man must be engaged and united in bringing glory to God. The worship service is to be Word centered- and full of spiritual reverence. The Holy Spirit must be present and active- and the Son of God who is the Word must be heard and His voice listened to. This is the only way in which our worship will be pleasing and acceptable to God! So when it comes to our worship- as it is in our prayers as well- we come to the Father in the name of the Son in the strength of the Spirit. Only those covered in the blood of the Lamb of God are acceptable and welcomed in His sight. Only those who have the Spirit dwelling within their hearts can bring a sweet-smelling offering that He delights in. So as Jesus was teaching this Samaritan woman, it is not the physical location that makes worship acceptable, but rather the state of your heart. The kind of people that the Father is seeking is those who are set free by the Truth and filled with the fire of the Spirit. Worship is not dictated by man, but rather our God! He alone has the right to tell us what kind of worshippers He is seeking. Why is God so concerned about worship? Well, we need to remember that true Worship always centers on His Son Jesus. In the OT, worship was teaching us about Jesus and pointing to His work. In our current day, our worship still points back to Jesus as we listen to His word. So to break this commandment is to slander the name of His Son- and we will bring up this concept of God's name again next week.

To conclude, the 2nd commandment deals with how we are to worship the One, True God. We do not need to make up our own ideas about God nor about how we are to worship Him. This is because He has revealed Himself clearly to us and He instructs us how to approach Him. We are to come into His presence with thanksgiving- bowing before Him in fear, reverence and awe. Our worship must be from the heart and engaging the mind. Worshipping in Spirit and in Truth. Coming to the Father in the name of the Son and the strength of the Spirit. That is the kind of worship and worshipper that God is pleased with. God is not only jealous that we worship Him alone, but also that we worship Him rightly! Trusting not in ourselves or our own wisdom, but trusting Him to instruct us on what God- honoring worship looks like. Jesus Christ reveals the proper way for us to worship the One, True God. So let us worship Him rightly today!