

The Second Commandment

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[0 : 0 0] Right. Later, we see in Acts 12, 22 through 23, and the people were shouting the voice of a God and not of a man.

Now, this is speaking of Herod as they praised Herod and said, immediately, an angel of the Lord struck him down because he did not give God the glory. And he was eaten by worms and breathed his last. So God judged him because what happened?

He was praised as God and didn't give God the glory. And so Paul is appalled as he sees these idols. We have another example here of Herod being proclaimed to God and not giving God the glory.

And maybe when we see the first commandment, it may seem to us that it is easy for us to obey the first commandment. Easy for us to obey the first commandment. Right. We're not making idols.

We don't have idols in our home. But as we look at it, much like much like I've said with all the commandments, what we're going to see is that. There's more to the commandment. There are many duties that are required in the commandment.

[1 : 1 0] There are many sins that are forbidden. So I want to spend some time looking at this commandment. So as we think about this, let me just say with the notes not to be switching the slides.

We're just going to probably stick with that. OK, sorry for that distraction. So as we look at this. If the first commandment is against worshiping the wrong gods.

We might also understand that the second commandment is against worshiping God in the wrong way. And I meant to say in my introduction. For all of you out there, in your worship guide, your bulletin, there is now I have some notes there.

And my thought originally was that this would be helpful for the kids to take notes. But some of you adults may enjoy this as well. But it will help you at least follow along in the sermon.

There's some places you can fill in the blanks. So if that's helpful, good. If it's not, you don't have to use it. Again, some feedback would be good. But I think one of our first blanks there is this quote.

[2 : 1 5] As we think about first and second commandment. This is Kevin DeYoung. If the first commandment is against worshiping the wrong God, the second commandment is against worshiping God in the wrong way.

Or we could say it another way and say the first commandment teaches us not to worship anything other than God. Do not worship anything other than God. That's what we saw last week.

The second commandment teaches us not to worship anything less than God. Anything less than God. And I think we'll see that as we go ahead. So sometimes when we think of the second commandment, we almost conflate it with the first commandment.

The first commandment God calls us not to worship any other gods. And we think of idol worship in terms of our worshiping these false gods. What I'm arguing is that's pretty much covered in the first commandment.

What the second commandment is getting at is primarily making idols toward our God. Worshiping God in the wrong way. But we're going to see this some. So the duties required.

[3 : 17] What does God's word require? And again, we're using the Westminster Larger Catechism to kind of look at some of this. This is question 108. And this is in the back of your bulletin. If you want to read along with the duties required, it's there.

So the first part that it says is to receive, respectfully perform, and preserve completely and purely all the regulations for religion and worship that God has established in his word.

So as we think about the duties required, we're looking at the positives. What are the positive sides of the commandment? The positive side is that God is asking us, telling us, commanding us to worship him the way he has commanded us to worship him.

So positively, we have to worship God rightly. Secondly, though, we see in the Westminster Larger Catechism, it says disapproving, denouncing, and opposing false worship and doing our best in accordance with our position and calling in life to eliminate it and all forms of idolatry.

So we're to worship God the right way, but we're also to oppose or disapprove of false worship. Now, again, I said earlier about Paul in Athens.

[4 : 45] He saw these things. His soul was stirred within him. He was bothered by it. His spirit was provoked, it says. But we see this is picking up where we left off, but also continuing to verse 17.

Now, while Paul was waiting for them in Athens, his spirit was provoked within him as he saw the city full of idols. So, therefore, he reasoned in the synagogue with the Jews and the devout persons and in the marketplace every day with those who happened to be there.

So here we have an example of Paul doing what we're saying the commandment calls us to. He's obeying the commandment. Well, his soul is provoked. Why is his soul provoked? Because there's breaking the first commandment, they're worshiping the wrong gods, and the second commandment, they have this statue to the unknown God, which he knows.

But we're not to make images of it. His soul is provoked. So what does he do? How does he respond? Well, he reasoned with the religious people in the synagogue of the Jews, the devout persons, but also in the marketplace every day.

Everyone who happened to be there, he reasoned with them, pointing them to the true God. And we see even later how it is he does this. He tells them about the unknown God.

[6 : 01] What you worship in ignorance, I now proclaim to you. But he helps them to the right worship. So the commandment's calling us where we see false worship to bring it into it. Now, as we think about that, consider that in our society and where we're living today, where false worship seems to be so prevalent and really so many ways we're moving in that direction.

Here's a couple of other examples. Deuteronomy 7, verse 5. So here's God giving a command of what they're to do in relation to these idols that have been set up.

And in this instance, it is, I think, primarily idols to false gods, including the Asherim. But they're to break them down, dash them in pieces, chop them down, and then burn them. That's pretty thorough.

But leave no remnant of this false worship in your midst. Likewise, in Isaiah 30, verse 22. Then you will defile your carved idols, overlaid with silver and your gold-plated metal images.

You will scatter them as unclean things. You will say to them, be gone. So just another example, this time in Israel, and perhaps some of these may have been to the true God, but again, they're to pretty much melt them down, destroy them, scatter them.

[7 : 30] Be gone. Get rid of it. And so in your notes here, there's a question for us. As we think through how do we apply this to ourselves, what are ways that we've broken the duties that God has called us to?

Broken this commandment by failing to do what God has required. Maybe what are ways that we've turned a blind eye to the world around us as they worship either our God wrongly or worship false gods?

Now, we've been looking at the duties required, but also the sins forbidden. So the next really point of my message is the sins forbidden.

And this is a little bit more lengthy as it's laid out in the catechism. And again, we're going to read what the catechism says. I tried to modernize some words, but if it's a little complex, we're going to work through it.

So, sins forbidden, imagining, recommending, demanding, practicing, or in any way approving any religious worship not established by God himself.

[8 : 38] So, what this is getting at is worshiping the true God the wrong way. And that's some of the distinction I've made really between the first and second commandment.

Worshiping the true God the wrong way. So, this is not something we would probably think of as idol worship. But are there ways we participate in worshiping God or even recommending, practicing, approving any religious worship not established by God himself?

How do we contribute to that? How do we participate in it? Do we either by our approval or recommendation lead people away from the right worship of God? That's really what it's getting at.

Do we by approval or recommendation lead people away from worshiping God the right way, the way God has established? Now, secondly, as we think of sins forbidden, this probably, you'll think of this more closely than what we see in the text.

But creating any likeness of God as the Trinity or as any one of his three persons, either internally in our minds or externally in the form of any kind of image or representation of a created being.

[9 : 57] So, making images of God, but notice also even in our minds. I think this is a right interpretation of what we see Jesus doing in the Sermon on the Mount.

Remember, we talked about this. He uses specific examples of murder and adultery. If you hate your brother, if there's lust in your heart, what about this commandment?

Are there ways in which we have images of God that are wrong, that we think about them, even if it affects how we worship? But the point is we're not to make or represent God in any way.

Even in our minds. I know that can be tempting. Even now, I cannot really probably address it without it being a temptation. But we're not to try to envision what God was like.

What he appears like. Or Jesus. Or the Spirit. I think one reason this makes this really difficult is probably movies and TVs in our time.

[11 : 03] Probably when I say Jesus, we all picture the same general image of what Jesus looks like because we've seen images of him. We've seen paintings of him, maybe from the Renaissance. We have this idea of that's what Jesus is supposed to look like.

But we don't know what he looked like. And that's not right. Or we have pictures of God. Again, I don't want you doing this. But I think our temptation is, again, from paintings and otherwise, God's this old man figure that we envision.

And yet, we know that God is Spirit. And we're going to talk more about that in a minute. But we can't picture Spirit. So we prefer an old man.

It's easier to deal with. But you see that we're diminishing God's glory. We're taking him from Spirit to something we can relate to. We're making him who is without creation, who is uncreated, into the creature, into the creation.

We're envisioning God as something less than God. Something that has been created. Now, I want to be careful, even as I approach this and say, this isn't saying that there cannot be room for art.

[12 : 15] It's not saying never make any images. In fact, in God's Word, we actually see that he gifts certain artists and craftsmen in the building of the tabernacle and in the temple later on.

He gifts them with special abilities as artists to make the temple beautiful. But you'll know there are no images of God in the tabernacle or the temple. We have some cherubim on the Ark of the Covenant.

We have pictures of grapes. We have bulls. But none of those are meant to be part of the worship of God. And so there's beauty reflected in what God's created.

But those things are not to be a means to which we worship God. They're not to affect how we worship God. We could say it another way and say we're not to worship any created thing or creature.

Or I could say it this way. We're not to worship the true God through any created thing or creature. They're not to be a means for our worship of God. I have a quote from R.C. Spruill.

[13 : 20] He says, When we call things holy that are not holy, we commit the sin of idolatry. This is the grievous error of idolatry. Giving to common things the respect, awe, worship, and adoration that belongs only to God.

To worship the creature instead of the creator is the essence of idolatry. And so I thought that was a great summary of what we're speaking of here. The catechism goes further.

It says, Any worship of such created likeness as if God were in them or as if they were a means to worshipping him. Now I've touched this a little bit. The means, a way in which we worship God.

But we're not to imagine God's in the substance of anything. And I think probably the closest that you, in terms of our worship at least, we're going to talk more about this in a minute.

But the Lord's table, right? This is denying transubstantiation if you're familiar with that. God is not present in that.

[14 : 28] It's not God. We say God is spiritually, or Christ is spiritually present in and under. But we don't worship God through those means. And we're not to worship any images of any kind.

The Catholic Church often makes a distinction between worship and veneration. But I think there's no legitimacy to that kind of distinction. Right? You set something apart as holy. You declare it to be holy.

You pray to God through Mary. Or through a statue of Mary, Joseph, whoever's out there in your yard. If you're using that as a means to pray to God, then you just declared it to be holy.

This is an object of worship. It's no longer just that I'm venerating them. We don't venerate anything beyond what God has venerated. And therefore, we can't worship through these things.

And fourthly, with the Westminster Larger Catechism, it says that we're not to create. I just should read it because I'm trying to put it into a sense.

[15 : 32] The creation of any likeness of any, excuse me. The creation of any likeness of invented gods, any worship of them, or service relating to them. Again, this is probably the most obvious.

This is the way we tend to think of what idolatry is. And we're probably, this is where we thought we got this commandment taken care of. I haven't built any idols lately.

Haven't made anything. You know, no statues in my house. But I think we really have to consider what are the other ways in which this is true of us that we may be relating to God through these things.

I mentioned earlier television and movies. And I think it's easy to allow ourselves to be okay with watching things that have this.

I think one popular TV show now is a show called Chosen. I've watched none of it. My understanding is I think it's the Latter-day Saints or maybe Jehovah's Witnesses, the Jehovah's Witnesses that are doing this show about Jesus.

[16 : 31] They're adding new words to him. There's images of him. There's probably a whole host of other movies that we may have seen that have Jesus or God in it. And even if we think, well, that's not an object to worship.

I'm not worshiping God in the movie. I'm not worshiping the movie. The question that we ought to consider is do these things that we allow ourselves to see, do they influence us when we worship?

In other words, if you're watching the TV show and you see Jesus walking around, he's saying all these things, and again, many of which are not in the Bible, and then you come to worship and you're thinking of Jesus, what picture comes to your mind?

If your image of God is being influenced by created things, we've missed the point. We've broken the commandment. And so we have to really consider what are we allowing ourselves to see?

What images are being created of God? That's difficult because that means sometimes even as Christians we have to say, I'm not going to participate in reading this Christian book or watching this Christian movie because I believe it breaks his commandment.

[17 : 37] I'm getting really into the details in any gritty, but I think that's where we need to consider and think about. Our Sunday School Material Great Commission, their approach has been that they would have a baby form of Jesus because babies are pretty generic, and they might have the bat side of Jesus because we know he's a man, you can't really tell anything.

Now, that being said, I think, okay, that's somewhat of a compromise. Maybe some of you would be uncomfortable with that. You have to think through yourself, how far do we go? What about your nativity scene? Is it okay to have the baby Jesus in the nativity scene?

I think God's Word is telling us what we are to do. We have to be real careful in making that decision for ourselves. Is this breaking the commandment? Is this the image of Jesus? I think, again, our tendency to say, well, I'm not worshiping through the nativity scene.

But let me ask you, is that influencing how you worship God? Is that in your mind when you worship God? Guys, I think it's a difficult question, but there's way more to it than what we probably think of when we think of making idols.

It's not just have I created a statue in my house that I'm worshiping, but how have we allowed images of God to influence our thoughts? And then, finally, the catechism says, all superstitious contrivances.

[19 : 11] Now, again, that's a little difficult, but for the kids what it's saying is get rid of superstition. All the kind of superstitious things that we might have that influence our worship. So here's some scripture passages that would demonstrate that.

Acts 19, 19. And a number of those who had practiced magic arts brought their books together and burned them in the sight of all. And they counted the value of them and found it came to 50,000 pieces of silver.

A great sacrifice. They've accumulated libraries, but they realize that they're superstitious. They're based in maybe even arguably spiritual powers that aren't God, that are influencing how they think about spiritual power and God, and so they burn it.

They get rid of it. Even the Ark of the Covenant was used like this by the Israelites in 1 Samuel 4, 3. And when the people came to the camp, the elders of Israel said, Why has the Lord defeated us today before the Philistines?

Let us bring the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord here from Shiloh, that it may come among us and save us from the power of our enemies. What are they doing there? They're taking a religious object, and they're using it as a superstitious good token, so they'll win the battle.

[20 : 35] It is the spiritual rabbit's foot. I'm going to bring this into battle, and we won't lose until we have the Ark of the Covenant here. You guys may remember what happens. They lose, and the Ark of the Covenant gets stolen.

But God's teaching them a lesson. You don't take these holy spiritual things and make them into something superstitious. But I think along with that, religious jewelry, I'm not saying that's forbidden.

Okay? Just bear with me. But do we use that sometimes, or even the sticker on our car? Do we use that as almost a good luck charm? I'm going to wear my cross today, so God's going to take care of me and bless me.

Now, maybe that's not the reason why it could be you want to use this as a means of evangelism. That's fine. But, do we sometimes use this in superstitious ways, or think, you know, maybe I'm not going to catch the red light, because I got the fish in the back of my car.

Right? That's not okay. But I think, in particular, Westminster Catechism, as they speak of superstitious contrivances, are really dealing with a lot of the worship of the Catholic Church. What was going on in that day, even what's happening today in our town, that if we have certain elements there, and we do it in certain ways, they, I mean, almost superstitious, but it's bringing some kind of special blessing to us.

[21 : 57] And then, along with that, any departure from the true worship of God, by adding to, or taking away from it, whether by our own invention, or received from some other tradition, and whether justified by antiquity, custom, devotional practice, good intentions, or any other excuse.

Now, some of you guys have been here for our adult Sunday school. We've been talking some about worship, worship, and the regular principle. And what this is getting at is really what we see laid out for us in the regular principle.

And this is the, can I say, negative side of what we saw earlier. God calls us to worship in the right way. That's the duty he requires of us. A sin he forbids for us is to worship him the wrong way.

To depart from the true worship of God, it says, by adding or taking away from it, we are not allowed by God to add or take away from his worship beyond what he's given to us.

I mentioned the regular principle. Maybe I should have laid that out. But the regular principle is whatever God commands to be done in worship, we must do. Whatever God forbids to be done in worship, we cannot do.

[23 : 13] And so God dictates our worship. If you want to figure out how all those things are worked out, come to Sunday school. We've been working through some of that. There's room for circumstances, and we can explain that later.

But the point of all that is to say, God and God alone determines how he is to be worshiped. When we start adding to it our best ideas, you know, this is really honoring.

I think God would really like it if I did this. Then we've broken the commandment. God hasn't asked us to worship him in that way. He's called us to worship him in a specific way.

This is Deuteronomy 4.2. You shall not add to the word that I command you, nor take from it, that you may keep the commandments of the Lord your God, that I command you. And then Jesus points out an example of the Pharisees in Matthew 15.9.

He says, speaking of them, in vain do they worship me, teaching his doctrines the commandments of man. And so there's a clear example. Tradition.

[24 : 19] Over time, things get added to God's commands, and they become commands of their own. That we have to obey or do certain things. And worshiping God in ways that we've added, or someone else has added, that we do just out of tradition or otherwise, is wrong.

God's called us to worship him the way he's commanded. So we're not allowed to add to it or take away from it. It says, by our own invention or received from tradition, or whether justified by antiquity, custom, devotional practice, good intentions, or any other excuse.

Even good intentions. We want to worship God, and so we think this will be glorifying to God. I think you all know we're coming to this, but right now where we are in Exodus, Moses is up on Mount Sinai receiving the Ten Commandments from God.

What are the people doing? They're working on a golden calf. And we're going to see later, but I truly believe their intention is to worship the true God.

But what are they doing? They think this is a good way to worship God. They're intimidated by the cloud and fire and lightning and earthquakes. And so they stay far back and they go, let's make something like God that we can worship.

[25 : 42] And the gods of the Egyptians, they had a bull God. Big, powerful, aggressive, but our God is gracious and kind. We'll just make a calf. And we're going to worship him.

He's approachable. A calf is approachable. Sinai, not approachable. And so here's an example. We want to worship God in a way that we can understand and approach.

And God detests that, as we'll see. And then, simony and anything sat religious.

I thought, this is probably not a term we use very often today. It's referring to Simon the Magus or Simon the Magician. And so kids, when it says simony, here's the definition that's given. It's buying or selling something spiritual.

And the expression of this has been clerical offices and things. Especially, again, thinking to the Reformation. Over the time of the Reformation, the Catholic Church were selling offices to put money into the church.

[26 : 46] But in particular, in any way profiting from. Now, the example, again, is Simon the Magus. You guys may remember, he sees the apostles working by the Holy Spirit, things that he cannot do through his magical powers, which probably were demonic.

And so he asked, can he buy the Holy Spirit? And he's judged for that. You don't buy the Holy Spirit. And so, trying to peddle spiritual things, and that would include things like buying indulgences, which again, isn't quite practiced the same way today, but maybe, maybe it's taught or practice, give some money to the church, and we're going to pray them out of purgatory sooner.

Right? Any kind of practice in which we make it, almost, that we can get, garner favor from God, by, investing. Maybe we even think, if I go to church enough, maybe it's not financial always, but that's going to make God somehow love me.

And then, any neglect of, content for, hindering, or opposition, to the worship and regulations established by God.

I won't expand on that. We've kind of addressed that some already. So again, in your notes, the question we can ask ourselves is, what are some ways, you have broken this commandment, by doing what God has forbidden?

[28 : 13] What are some ways we, so, when we think of practical application, I don't want us to just think, those people worship idols. All of us have broken all these commandments. What are ways that we've done this?

What are ways we've departed from the worship of the true God? And then, look with me at verses 5 and 6 in our text. So we've looked at the duties required, we've looked at the sins forbidden.

This is one of the examples of a commandment, that also has a curse and a promise, included in it. And we see that in verses 5 and 6. You shall not bow down to them, or serve them, for I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God.

Visiting the iniquity of the fathers and the children, to the third and fourth generation, of those who hate me. But showing steadfast love to thousands of those, who love me, and keep my commandments.

So, a curse, and a promise. And this same curse and promise, is repeated several times in the Old Testament. I counted at least three times, that it specifically, word for word quoted, and maybe even more than ten times, where it's referenced in some way or another.

[29 : 29] But here's an example of that. This is Exodus 34, 6 through 7. The Lord passed before him, and proclaimed, The Lord, the Lord, a God merciful, and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness.

Keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity, and transgression, and sin, but who will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers, and the children, and the children's children, to the third and fourth generation.

And so, there we see, it's that same wording, it's been reversed. It starts with the promise, it then moves to the curse, but the same wording. So what does this mean? Well, first, as we think about the curse, that we see there, he's going to visit, the iniquity of the fathers, and the children, and the children's children, to the third and fourth generation.

I want you to understand, this does not mean, that God will judge someone, unrighteously. God is a righteous judge. He will not judge us wrongly. So it's not saying, your dad was a bad man, and so, God's going to send you to hell, because your dad was bad.

That's not what it's saying. God will not judge us, based on our families, God judges us, on ourselves.

[30 : 52] And hopefully, if you trust in Jesus Christ, God judges you, because you're in Christ. He judges you, because of Christ. Not because of yourself. And so, any chance of God, not judging yourself, is not because of your parents, but because of Christ.

That he would judge you, based in Christ, or on Christ. In Ezekiel 18, 20, we have, what I think is really meant, to be a corrective, because, even, we think of, Pastor Thompson's been preaching, through the book of Job, and Job's suffering.

And what is, what is the advice, he gets from all his friends? You're suffering, because you did something. Now, we're talking about, third and fourth generation here, but, again, that idea, that, there's a curse, because of this.

Ezekiel 18, 20, says, the soul, the soul whose sin shall die. The son shall not suffer, for the iniquity of the father, nor the father suffer, for the iniquity of the son. The righteousness, of the righteous, shall be upon himself, and the wickedness, of the wicked, shall be upon himself.

So, we might think of this, as a corrective, in misunderstanding the text. So, it's not saying, that you're going to be judged, because of the sin, of your parents. So, what is it saying then?

[32 : 03] And again, kids, if you're following along, in your notes, what it's telling us, is that children, who share in their parents' sin, will share in their parents' judgment. Sharing in their sin, will share in their judgment.

So, why even bring that up, if that's true? Well, I think it's because, often, our sins are passed on, to our children. And this ought to be a rebuke, for us as parents, to consider our own lives, but, either by example, or tendency, we pass these sins on.

Another way of saying this, is that, sin is contagious, and infectious. And so, the natural outworking, of a sinful family, will be, sinful children.

Right? They're going to live, like their parents. I had the opportunity, this summer, I played golf, and, I had, was partnering up, with another man, and he brought his son, with him.

And, his son was seven, and, the kid was, using, a large number, of cuss words. Which, his dad wasn't bothered by, because, that was kind of the language, of, his father as well.

[33 : 13] And I thought, that's the home. That's the environment, they live in. We pick up on those things, the kids pick up on those, this is the language, we use at home. And it may be, beyond just language, and I'm not necessarily, talking about cuss words, I'm just saying, it passes on in the family.

You, begin to behave, like your children. So, understand that, this will be passed on. And so, if you live in these, idolatrous ways, your kids are going to, suffer the curse from that.

And if we understand that rightly, that it's contagious, it's infectious, I want you to, to think about, reflect on your own life. How many of you, don't raise your hands, how many of you, were raised in those, kind of homes?

Where the, obvious end result, should have been, that you went the same way, as your parents, in opposing God, and not worshiping God rightly.

And as we think about that, if this is the natural course of events, that iniquities passed on, how great is God's grace, that some of you, have been delivered from that. That that's not who you are.

[34 : 23] That the, abuse, the alcoholism, drug use, whatever it may be, that was the, the pattern for generations, in your household, stopped by the grace of God.

By Him working in your life. So that would be a cause for praise. So the curse is there. You're going to pass this stuff on. If you break this commandment, I think also, we see the promise.

Again in your notes, God shows, steadfast love, to thousands, we see in verse 6. Now, the word generations, isn't in this passage at all.

I know it says, third and fourth generations, that makes sense, when we read the passage. To the fathers, on the children, to the third and fourth, is what it says. Well, generation is implied.

But so likewise, we see, it says in verse 6, but showing steadfast love, to thousands, I believe generations, is implied here as well. Even if we don't understand this, in terms of generations, what's being communicated, to us here?

[35 : 28] Listen to Deuteronomy 7, 9. Know therefore, that the Lord, your God, is God, the faithful God, who keeps covenant, and steadfast love, with those who love Him, and keep His commandments, to a thousand generations.

So there we see, the specific wording, a thousand generations. And I think again, that's what's being implied here. So, your sin, is passed on, to the third and fourth generation.

God's steadfast love, His covenant love, is passed on, to a thousand generations. Remember the scales? How's that way up? Right?

As we think about the curse, what we see is, the promise, far outweighs the curse. God's covenant, steadfast love, is so much greater, than the damage we do, even in our sin, and passing that on in families.

Which goes back, to what I said before, with God working, in some of our lives. God's delivered you. Why? Because the steadfast love, is greater even in the sins, of our parents, and our grandparents, for generations.

[36 : 36] And so the curse, is for those who hate God. The promise, is for those, who keep His commandments. visiting the iniquity, of the fathers, on the children, to the third and fourth generation, of those who hate me, it says in verse 5, and verse 6, but showing steadfast love, to thousands of those, who love me, and keep my commandments.

And so this is, parallelism going on, where, what does love of God, look like? Love of God, results in obedience, to His commands. How is hatred of God displayed?

Disobedience to His commands. Again, don't misunderstand. Obeying God's command, doesn't make you love God, or make God love you. We don't earn it. But what he's saying is, it's a reflection of our hearts.

If we love God, we want to keep His commandments. If we hate God, we despise His commandments. Or, love of God is expressed, in obedience to His commands. It ought to delight our hearts, to do what He, asks us to.

This is a little bit longer, and probably too small, for you to be able to read. But, why should the nation, I'm sorry, Psalm 115, 2-8. Why should the nation say, where is their God?

[37 : 47] Our God is in the heavens. He does all that He pleases. Their idols are silver and gold. The work of human hands. They have mouths, but they do not speak.

Eyes, but do not see. They have ears, but do not hear. Noses, but do not smell. They have hands, but do not feel. Feet, but do not walk. And they do not make a sound in their throat.

Those who make them become like them, so do all who trust in them. And so, in Psalm 115, we have an expression of, why is idolatry so bad? When we worship, we become, maybe I can say it this way, we become like, what we worship.

We want to worship God rightly. We want to worship Christ as He's laid forth in His word. We've got to see Him. We've got to believe these things. And so, if we become like what we worship, I could almost say it another way and say, what we worship becomes like us, is the main problem, I think, in a lot of churches today, in our country.

We don't want the God of the Bible. We want the God that's like me. We want God to reflect me, rather than us reflecting God. And again, all this should teach us the seriousness of sin.

[38 : 59] As we look at this commandment, it's not as simple as just not making statues in our home. Not having those. It's something far, far greater. And as we look at this, we ought to be convinced that all of us have sinned and broken this commandment.

We're in need of God's grace. So, let's look at some closing aspects of the application. First, and again, all the application points I put in the notes.

So, kids, if you're following along, listen closely for the application here. It's there in your notes. Number one, God is spirit and surpasses our vain imaginations.

God is spirit. Now, vain imaginations probably wasn't a great way to say it if I really want the kids to understand it. But what I'm saying, kids and adults, is that God being spirit, we cannot possibly imagine what God is like.

And so, to presume to manufacture an image of God, even in our minds, will it ever measure up? No. It's never going to measure up.

[40 : 03] And if it doesn't measure up and I'm worshiping that which is not measuring up to God, then I'm not worshiping God at all. I've diminished God. I've diminished His glory. Deuteronomy 4, 15.

Therefore, watch yourselves very carefully since you saw no form on the day that the Lord spoke to you at Horeb out of the midst of the fire. So, thinking back to what we've seen, you didn't see an image of God, therefore, don't make an image of God.

Maybe another way of expressing this is to say idols are poor substitutes for God. It's a substitute God. It's replacing the God that we can't see, the God that's so powerful. Again, the golden bull that we spoke of, the golden calf.

Blaise Pascal said, There is nothing so abominable in the eyes of God and of men as idolatry, whereby men render to the creature that honor which is due only to the Creator.

Think of Romans, that creator-creature distinction. They exchange the worship of God for the worship of creatures. That's offensive to the Creator.

[41 : 18] Which is greater, He who created or that which was created? It's the Creator. And so to imagine we worship God through something He created is to misworship Him, to break the commandment.

And idols or any way that we might imagine God cannot accurately communicate to us who He is. And therefore, I think we diminish His worship.

I could say it more strongly and say we blaspheme God when we worship God as something less than what He is. We blaspheme Him. We're proclaiming God is this when God is not that.

He's far beyond that. Or we could say all of us have too small a view of God. And when we try to worship God based on what we imagine versus what we have contained in His Word, we're going to worship Him wrongly.

John 4, 24. God is spirit and those who worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth. Now again, this points that we can worship Him anywhere, but also those who worship Him must worship Him in spirit.

[42 : 30] We worship God as He is. I think all attempts at idol worship is to try to make God more approachable. We're committing the same sin as the Israelites there that moment at Mount Sinai.

We want a God that we can approach that's easy for us to interact with. Not the God of the Bible who admittedly is powerful and a little scary. Secondly, God is jealous for His glory.

God is jealous for His glory. And idols minimize that glory. They say God's less than what He is and God doesn't like that.

And jealousy in God is not sin. All of us should be jealous for the glory of God. So Isaiah 42 verse 8, I am the Lord, that is my name.

My glory I give to no other, nor my praise to carve idols. So why is idolatry wrong? Because God won't share His glory. Not even with lesser versions of Him.

[43 : 42] one commentator, Alan Herman, said, God is the jealous husband who will not tolerate His bride, Israel, entering into a relationship with another so-called God.

Now, I think that's probably a great way for us to picture it because how wrong would it be for a husband who is happy for his wife to cheat on him? We don't share certain relationships.

They're not made to be shared. Thirdly, God intends that we see Him by the Word.

We see God through His Word, the Bible. Deuteronomy 4.12, Then the Lord spoke to you out of the midst of the fire. You heard the sound of words but saw no form.

There was only a voice. Therefore, watch yourselves very carefully since you saw no form on that day that the Lord spoke to you at Horeb out of the midst of the fire. And so, God intends to, again, for us to see Him by His Word.

[44 : 46] At that moment, it's the spoken Word. Today, we have God's Word written for us to see Him through. I think of Romans 10. How will they believe in the one of whom they have not heard and how will they hear unless someone preaches to them?

Faith comes from hearing and hearing the Word of God. That's how people believe. Fourthly, God creates images of God.

We don't create images of God. Now, I want to be careful in this not to misunderstand this but God creates images of God. I thought of two examples of this. Genesis 1.26 through 27. Humans were made in the image of God.

We're not to worship humans or worship God through humans but God has given us an image. And what I would say is the image of God in us is not a visual representation of God.

God's Spirit. Our human bodies don't look like Him but it has a lot to do with our moral ability, our reasoning ability, what God has made us that differentiates us from the animals.

[45 : 51] Right? But not primarily physical appearance. So, again, the things in which we image God are intangible. They cannot be seen or touched. Secondly, and again, let's be careful, but baptism and the Lord's Supper are visual representations of the gospel.

They communicate what God has done. Again, they are not God. We don't worship God in that thing but they do point to realities of who God is and God's given us this.

I think how gracious of God because He's not obligated to give us any visual representation but He gives us baptism and Lord's Supper. And then, fifthly, Christ fulfills the second commandment.

We're going to see that all along. He fulfills all these commandments but He fulfills the second commandment. And one way, and this ties in with point four, I couldn't really combine them in this way but what is the greatest way in which God has shown His image?

It's in the Son. Jesus is the image of the Father. Hebrews 1, 3. He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of His nature and He upholds the universe by the word of His power.

- [47 : 09] The radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint. Think of graven image. It's that imprint of His nature. That's what Jesus is. So if you want to see God the Father, if you want to see an image of God the Father, what do you need to see?
- It's not the physical Jesus, is it? John 14, 9. Jesus said to Him, Have I been with you so long and you still do not know me, Philip? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father.
- How can you say, show us the Father? They don't need to pray that because Christ has been in their midst. If we want to know what God the Father is like, where do we go?
- To Christ. And where do we find Christ? In His word. Right? We read what God is like. We behold God for who He is. Again, Colossians 1, 15 communicates the same truth.
- He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. But notice the image of the invisible. Let that sink in. The image of the invisible.
- [48 : 11] We can't see the invisible, but we have Christ that's been given to us. So, Sitsley, well let me just say, just because Christ is the image of God doesn't mean it's okay to make images of Jesus.
- The same principles still apply that we've seen throughout. Sitsley, by God's grace, Christians have been delivered from such useless ways. And by useless ways I'm referring to those patterns of false worship.
- So, for example, 1 Peter 1, 18 it says, knowing that you were ransomed from the futile ways, that's what I mean by worthless ways, they produce nothing, the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, what we might make an idol out of, but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot.
- And so, again, sins passed on from father to father to the third and fourth generations. But some of you in this room, I can even go further and say, all of us in this room have been delivered from futile ways.
- The Gentiles did not know God. They worshipped God because we all know that there is a God, but they worshipped Him through images, through false gods. If you're a Christian today, you've been ransomed from that by the blood of Christ has freed you from false worship.
- [49 : 35] How wrong would it be for the blood of Christ that's ransomed us for us then to go back to worshipping God in futile ways? God's calling us in the second commandment. Don't worship Him in useless ways.
- Worship Him in the right way, the powerful way, the way that's revealed to us in the Word of God. Seventh, be on guard. John Calvin, I think, rightly called our hearts perpetual idol factories.
- We're always making idols. There are always other things that we worship, false gods, but also worshipping God in the wrong way. And so we always have to be on guard against this. We need the help of the Spirit to fight against the tendency in our minds to make idols.
- We even have to watch out for mental images of God when we try to diminish who He is or even worship Him rightly by what we can envision in our minds. Eighthly, we are to patiently wait.
- What do I mean by that? Well, what I mean by patiently waiting is one day we will see Him. Right? We want to see the image. We want to see God. Good! Hang around for a little while.
- [50 : 44] Trust in Jesus Christ and we know that Christ is returning and we will see Him as He is. And when we see Him as He is, we will be changed. We will be conformed into His image.

We will be made like Him. Glorified. And so, God intends for us to worship Him through image. Just not yet. In eternity, we're to worship Him in that way.

I would say as well that one day when we are in the new heavens and the new earth and we see God for who He is, then we will understand rightly why God opposed idols.

Why anything else that we may have envisioned to be God diminish His glory? The reason I think we're often okay with it is because we have not beheld, we have not seen, we have not known how glorious is our God.

I think even if we set up an idol of a car, let's say, we want a certain car. Mom and dad maybe, or your wife if she's spunky, gets you the Matchbox version.

[51 : 55] Right? Does that measure up? Are any of us thrilled that we get to drive? No, we can't drive the Matchbox. I can't fit in it. Actually, I tried to step, it crushed, the wheels fell off. Right?

Nobody looks at the Matchbox and says, wow, that's a great car. It's lesser than the real. One day we will behold the whole of who God is.

And then we'll understand why He opposes these things. Finally, ninthly, pray. God calls us to pray. And if we want to do this rightly, we need God's help.

He has to do this in us. And so I encourage you to pray. I thought, of all the things I saw in preparation, I thought William Cooper probably had the best version of a prayer that we could consider or pray for.

He said, the dearest idol I have known, whate'er that idol be, help me to tear it from thy throne and worship only thee. So, I think it's up there on the screen now, you can see it, but I want to read it one more time.

[53 : 01] The dearest idol I have known, whatever that idol may be, help me to tear it from thy throne and worship only thee. So as we close today, let that be our prayer. Let's pray.

Dear Heavenly Father, we thank you for your word and the truth that we have contained in it. And Lord, we know it's difficult for our minds to wrap around these commandments.

But Lord, we pray that you would do this one thing for us. That whatever idols we may create, whatever lesser ways we may seek to worship you, even thinking of tying it with the first commandment, whatever other gods we may seek to worship in other ways.

Lord, we pray, tear those things from us. Deliver us from them. That we would worship only you. And Lord, not by our own imaginations, but that we worship you the way you've commanded, the God that you are, all your glory.

We pray this in Christ's name. Amen.