

“The Perfect Ten #2: Worshipping the Creating, Just, Merciful God” Deuteronomy 5:8-10

Last week, we said that the “Perfect Ten” are laws about Love. The first is a law that gives you and me a personal God, and warns against the danger of serving other Gods.

When the other god is material things, we call it Materialism.

But another form of Materialism is serving the one, true God thru other persons or things.

It is the sin addressed in the 2nd Commandment

The 1st Com. is against worshipping a false God.

The 2nd is against Worshipping the true God in a false manner.

As you look at it in Deut. 5:8-10, I'd like you to see that it tells us about - The Nature of God, that God judges idolatry, but also that God is merciful.

1. The Second Commandment tells us about the Nature of God.

" 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; you shall not bow down to them nor serve them."

A. God is immaterial, a Spirit, and so must not be Worshipped as if He were something created.

Specifically, it forbids the worshipping of God by images, or any other way that draws the heart away from his glory rather than toward his glory. [Piper Baptist Catechism]

The prohibition of images and likenesses derives from the argument of ch. 4 that at Horeb, God's revelation was audible but not visible.

Deuteronomy 4:12, 15-19 (NKJV) And the LORD spoke to you out of the midst of the fire. You heard the sound of the words, but saw no form; you only heard a voice... Take careful heed to yourselves, for you saw no form when the LORD spoke to you at Horeb out of the midst of the fire, lest you act corruptly and make for yourselves a carved image in the form of any figure: the likeness of male or female, the likeness of any animal that is on the earth or the likeness of any winged bird that flies in the air, the likeness of anything that creeps on the ground or the likeness of any fish that is in the water beneath the earth. And take heed, lest you lift your eyes to heaven, and when you see the sun, the moon, and the stars, all the host of heaven, you feel driven to worship them and serve them, which the

LORD your God has given to all the peoples under the whole heaven as a heritage.”

These are all images of worship they would have seen in Egypt.

What it requires: That we keep purely and completely all forms of Worship that God has instituted in His Word:

- Prayer, including Adoration, Thanksgiving, Confession and Supplication
- Ministry of the Word
- the Ordinances: Baptism, Lord's Supper
- Biblical church government and discipline
- Ministries of Mercy

In Jesus' day, many Jews interpreted the prohibition to be against any image or picture whatsoever, but how then do you account for the images of the cherubim on the ark of the Covenant, or the images on the curtains of the tabernacle?

The Commandment refers, rather, to making anything with the intention of Worshipping it.

B. It would be wrong to make an image of God because to make an image that would be true would be impossible as well as forbidden.

Pictures of Christ, though not necessarily harmful, have the potential problem that they portray only the

human side and not the divine, and so are at least incomplete, and at most a misrepresentation.

Those who use images in Worship sometimes reply, "We don't Worship images; we only use them as a tool thru which we worship God," but we need to then reply,

[1] "Where has God instructed you to do this?"

[2] "The idol-worshipper may say the same thing"

In Rom. 1:21-25, Paul sees idolatry as a tendency to Worship the creation more than the Creator, and so change the Truth of God into a lie: "because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Professing to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man--and birds and four-footed animals and creeping things. Therefore God also gave them up to uncleanness, in the lusts of their hearts, to dishonor their bodies among themselves, who exchanged the truth of God for the lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator"

What material things are you serving or Worshiping or using as material images of God?

John 4:24 "God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth."

trans: The second Commandment tells us about the Nature of God. Now in the reason given, we find ...

2. The reason first tells us that God judges idolatry.

"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"

No sin in Scripture has been judged by God with plagues more than the sin of idolatry.

A. The reason God gives is His jealousy, or fervent zeal for His own Worship, and His indignation of false Worship.

We think of Jealousy as selfishness, but jealousy is not always a bad thing. It is in fact the language of love.

In a husband or wife desiring the single-minded devotion of their spouse, jealousy may be a very good thing.

God loves us, & desires our exclusive devotion. He compare His love to that of a husband for his wife.

But the prophets often called His people an "adulterous" people, worshipping other gods.

God regards idolatry as Spiritual adultery.

B. God regards idolatry as tantamount to "hating" God. "of those who hate me,"

Those that worship images pretend to love God, but God interprets it as hate because it disregards His instruction about Himself as well as His express command

C. Those that "hate" Him, God allows to suffer negative consequences ["visiting the iniquity"]

While it is true that not all sorrows are God's chastening, let us not forget that God does "punish" people at times to chasten them.

D. The harm is sometimes extends to families.

This is not God punishing innocent children for up to four generations. Rather, up to four generations of those who hate God may suffer the effects of their ancestors' sins or even continue in the same sins.

The view that innocent children are punished for their parents' sins is opposed in Jer. 31:29–30 and Ezek. 18:2–4, but they may suffer for them.

The NLT translates, "I lay the sins of the parents upon their children; the entire family is af-

fect—even children in the third and fourth generations of those who reject me.”

How sad to be the child of a Spiritual materialist.

Children tend to walk in the steps of their parents, and so come under the same judgments.

What a responsibility we parents have !

trans: So we learn from the second commandment that God judges idolatry, but also ...

3. The reason given tells us God is merciful: v. 6 "but showing mercy to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments."

“But” contrasts God’s treatment of those who hate him with his treatment of those who love him.

A. He shows mercy unto thousands.

1. It is mercy, so that means it is given to undeserving sinners.

2. It's extent is greater than His judgments: 1,000 vs. 3 or 4 generations.

This is because God delights in mercy, not judgment: Micah 7:18 (NKJV) Who is a God like You, Pardoning iniquity And passing over the

transgression of the remnant of His heritage? He does not retain His anger forever, Because He delights in mercy.”

His grace is His glory, as when Moses asked to see His glory: Exodus 33:18-19 (NKJV) And he said, "Please, show me Your glory." Then He said, "I will make all My goodness pass before you, and I will proclaim the name of the LORD before you. I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion."

God's glory is seen in His mercy toward sinners.

3. What are the properties of "mercy"?

a. It is free & generously given.

b. It is powerful: it changes hard hearts to soft.

c. It is superabundant. 1 Peter 1:3 (NKJV) Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,

d. It is abiding. "his mercy endures forever."

4. How does God "show mercy"?

a. In daily provisions

- b. In preventing many evils
- c. In restraining us from sin
- d. In guiding and directing our lives
- e. In correcting us.
- f. In pardoning us
- g. In sanctifying us
- h. In hearing our Prayers
- i. Most of all, in saving us thru Christ's blood

If you want mercy: - You must seek it in Christ.
 - You must seek it in Wor-

ship

B. God's mercy is to those who love Him.

God's steadfast love far outlasts the effects of sin on subsequent generations.

The first two commandments together become a great means of mercy because love to God produces all other areas of Righteousness.

1. What is love for God, properly?

a. Love for not only His benefits, but for His attributes, His excellencies.

b. It is whole-hearted love.

c. It is flaming love, not cold love

2. How does one come to love God?

a. By studying to know Him.

b. By becoming familiar with His deeds in Scripture.

c. By Meditating on Him.

3. What is the test? How can I know I love God?

Those who love God ...

a. Desire His presence

b. Do not love sin

c. Are not much in love with worldly things

d. Cannot imagine living w/o Him.

e. Take pains to gain Him

f. Love God's favorites, the saints.

g. Fear dishonoring Him

h. Keep His Commandments

trans: which brings us to the phrase, ...

C. "that love me and keep my commandments."

Knowing the Commandments w/o keeping them does not entitle one to any mercy.

Jesus said, John 14:15 (NKJV) "If you love Me, keep My commandments.", and John 15:10 (NKJV) "If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love, just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love."

1. But you say, "Who can keep them all?"

"Keeping" may not be the same as fulfilling them perfectly.

Watson: "Keeping involves 5 things:

[1] Taking seriously every one, neglecting none.

[2] Desiring to keep all

[3] Grieving at our failures

[4] Endeavoring to keep them completely.

[5] Trusting in the blood of Christ for our failures.

2. This keeping must be voluntary, for "Religious deeds done unwillingly are worthless."

The second commandment. tells us of
The Nature of God: He is essentially Spirit.
It tells us God judges idolatry, but also ...
God is merciful

- Is He your God?

If not, does this God attract you?

If you have Him for your God, are you on guard against worshipping something He made?

Action: Ask God to reveal to you if you are making an idol of something God or you have made.

Thank God for loving you as zealously as a husband who greatly loves his wife.

Tell someone one way God has shown mercy to you in Jesus Christ.