

Walking with Jesus Through Sinai:
 Seeking Moral Clarity in an Age of Chaos with the 10 Commandments
 CPC Adult Sunday Studies Fall 2024
 7 - Second Commandment

The Proper Worship of God

Review: We're moving from the Preface and First Commandment - *"I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. "You shall have no other gods before me."* - to the second. The 1st is concerned with treating God as God in all our ways and in our entire life. We're now moving to more specific ways in which we are to treat God as God, in this case when it comes to worship.

The 2nd Commandment - Exodus 20:4-6 - *"You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or 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 or serve them, for I the LORD your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and the fourth generation of those who hate me, 6 but showing steadfast love to thousands of those who love me and keep my commandments."*

- **The main concern** is v.5 - "shall not bow down to or serve" - rather than simply any type of making.
- **The assumptions are:** 1. We will worship something and will be tempted to worship almost anything! 2. God alone is worthy of worship. 3. Sincerity of worship does not justify what you worship, i.e. just because you're genuine doesn't make it right.
 - V.4 - God goes out of his way to clarify that nothing else in all creation is worthy of worship.
- Considering "jealous" akin to a jealous husband or wife for the exclusive love of their partner, does vv.5-6 make more sense? How does the fact that this is annexed to the end of this commandment impact our understanding of it?

Larger Catechism Q. 108. What are the duties required in the second commandment?

A. The duties required in the second commandment are, the receiving, observing, and keeping pure and entire, all such religious worship and ordinances as God hath instituted in his Word; particularly prayer and thanksgiving in the name of Christ; the reading, preaching, and hearing of the Word; the administration and receiving of the sacraments; church government and discipline; the ministry and maintenance thereof; religious fasting; swearing by the name of God, and vowing unto him: as also the disapproving, detesting, opposing all false worship; and, according to each one's place and calling, removing it, and all monuments of idolatry.

We are to worship God as God has told us to - "as God has instituted in his Word."

1. Positive Command (Regulative Principle) - Our worship of God is not something we decide or come up with; neither is it something where we simply *avoid* things God has forbidden. It's a positive command: do only what I have told you to do, no more and no less.

1. This may sound oppressive, but notice how it's meant to be liberating! We *get* to worship God as He delights in, and are free from any human burden that God has not prescribed!

2. Elements (essentials) vs. forms

1. As the Confession of Faith (WCF 21.5) puts it, "the reading of the Scriptures with godly fear, the sound preaching and conscionable hearing of the Word, in obedience unto God, with understanding, faith, and reverence, singing of psalms with grace in the heart; as also, the due administration and worthy receiving of the sacraments instituted by Christ, are **all parts of the ordinary religious worship of God**: beside religious oaths, vows, solemn fastings, and thanksgivings upon **special occasions**, which are, in their several times and seasons, to be used in an holy and religious manner."

1. These are the **essentials of worship**, which are never to be added to or subtracted. One important distinction is between these "elements" and the "forms" in which they take shape. Forms are defined as "some

circumstances concerning the worship of God, and government of the church, common to human actions and societies, which are to be ordered by the light of nature, and Christian prudence, according to the general rules of the Word, which are always to be observed.” (WCF 1.6)

2. Our Book of Church Order writes, “The Lord Jesus Christ has prescribed **no fixed forms for public worship** but, in the interest of life and power in worship, has given His Church a large measure of liberty in this matter. It may not be forgotten, however, that there is true liberty only where the rules of God’s Word are observed and the Spirit of the Lord is, that all things must be done decently and in order, and that God’s people should serve Him with reverence and in the beauty of holiness. From its beginning to its end a service of public worship should be characterized by that simplicity which is an evidence of sincerity and by that beauty and dignity which are a manifestation of holiness.”
 1. For example, if we’re commanded to “sing psalms with grace in the heart”, that’s the *essential*, but the *form* is the tune, style, volume, language, etc., which should all have an intentional purpose, but are not specifically instituted by God.
 2. Thus, Presbyterians have a “Directory” of worship, not a rule or common language of prayer or worship. The forms are directed by the essentials, and the essentials can’t be lost. It’s a “both/and”:
 1. As opposed to **hierarchical forms** (Catholic, Orthodox, Anglican, etc) given from on high. This is also linked to our view of the kingdom of God being in heaven, and no place/culture/language on earth is closer or privileged.
 2. As opposed to **no forms** (Baptist, non-denominational) where they’re simply avoiding what God has forbidden.
 3. *How does this distinction between elements and forms actually help us keep the “positive command” of Scripture?*

Worshipping in and with Jesus, our true worship leader

“Now the point in what we are saying is this: we have such a high priest, one who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in heaven, a minister in the holy

places, in the true tent that the Lord set up, not man. . . . For Christ has entered, not into holy places made with hands, which are copies of the true things, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God on our behalf. . . . Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus, by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain, that is, through his flesh, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. . . . But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable angels in festal gathering, and to the assembly of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect, and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel.” (Hebrews 8.1-2, 9.24, 10.19, 12.22-24)

- James Torrance comments, “The worship and mission of the church are the gift of **participating** through the Holy Spirit in the incarnate Son's **communion with the Father** and the Son's mission from the Father to the world . . . There is only one true Priest through whom and with whom we draw near to God our Father. . . There is only one offering which is truly acceptable to God, and it is not ours. . . . That is why the Reformers, in their critique of certain medieval concepts of priesthood, stressed the sole priesthood of Christ, and reinterpreted the church as a **royal priesthood participating in the priesthood of Christ**. . . . Christ is presented to us as the Son living a life of union and communion with the Father in the Spirit, presenting himself in our humanity through the Spirit to the Father on behalf of humankind. . . . He receives the Spirit from the Father for us, vicariously, in his humanity, that out of his fullness he might baptize the church by the Spirit at Pentecost into a life of shared communion, mission, and service.” (Torrance, *Worship, Community and the Triune God of Grace*)
 - Notice the so-called “**priesthood of all believers**” does NOT emphasize the individual believer as much as the fact that there is only one priest, in whom all believers participate, and which also implies there’s only one mediator, Jesus Christ.
- Christian, Trinitarian worship is not simply our duty, our offering, our prayers, with a sermon that motivates us, rather it is a **double movement** of God to humans and humans to God; or, in other words, from the Father, through the Son, in the Spirit **and** to the Father, through the Son, in the Spirit.