

“THE FIRST COMMANDMENT”

Text: Exodus 20:3

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INTRODUCTION:

1) The fool deny there is God: “The fool says in his heart: There is no God. They are corrupt, their deeds are vile; there is no one who does good.” (Psalm 14:1) Denying the existence of God isn't a modern day problem. Thousands of years ago when King David wrote the psalms, he told us there were those who denied the existence of God. If you have a chance to hear the atheists talked about no-god theory, you can tell they are the same kind of people as those in David's time. The logic of the atheists is so contradictory: They can't prove there isn't God while they demand us to give them proof there is God. That is why God calls them fool while they claim to be wise or intelligent.

2) The wicked snub at God: “In his pride, the wicked does not seek God. In all his thoughts there is no room for God.” (Psalm 10:4) The wicked are not the same as the fool. This wicked don't deny the existence of God but snub at the authority of God in their wicked life style. Thousands of years after King David, John says the same thing: “Everyone who does evil hates the light and will not come to the light for fear that his deeds will be exposed.” (John 3:20) The holy God can't coexist with evil and evil doers reject God as the authority over their lives. Many of the wicked today claim their right to do whatever pleases them without limit. These people recognize there is God, they just don't care about Him and His authority over their lives.

THREE ELEMENTS IN THIS COMMANDMENT: “You shall not have other gods before me.” (Ex 20:3)

1) There is one true God: This is the first of the Ten Commandments God gave to the Israelites and by extension to all human beings. There isn't any reference to the existence or the origin of God because God doesn't need to prove his existence to anyone. We will discuss more on this Supreme God in the next section of this sermon.

2) There are other false gods: Historically, we see this is true in all history, culture and races. From very early in human history, the desire of man in his search of God went stray in the creation of many gods and religions. In this modern days, people continue to create many gods, just not the same as those in the ancient time. Many seemingly harmless objects become gods to many people: Wealth, power, glamor, success, fame, even people. In some cultural and political system, human objects were made to be gods to their worshipers without question. Many of the atheists do have their own gods, just not that true God of supreme power and authority over them.

3) God forbids all other gods: Some may interpret “before” as “over” or “above” in this commandment, that God forbids his people to place any of the gods man may have created to be “over or above” this true God. This interpretation seems to allow man to create many gods and assumes that God doesn't care, but God does. Read the next commandment and you will see that God doesn't allow this to happen. God doesn't allow us to have any god besides Him, period. Any creation of god or gods violates God's command.

THIS TRUE GOD IS THE FIRST: God commands all of us to exalt Him as the only true God so much that He puts this commandment at the top of all Ten Commandments. God wants us to treat Him first for many good reasons. Here are only a few to show us He deserves the first and the highest.

1) This true God created all things: “In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.” (Genesis 1:1) Without this only true God, nothing may be here including all of us. None of other major religions, Islam or Buddhism, claims their god created anything. Being the creator of the universe is a tremendous position of authority that puts our God way above all other gods man made. In fact all other gods man had made are from things the true God had created. How can any other god or gods man had made compare or compete with this God, the Creator, in any and all priority lists man may have? Who else can any one, god or man, take any position of authority before this true God? As Paul says in Acts 17:28, “For in Him we live and move and have our being. As some of your poets have said: We are His offspring.”

2) This true God redeems us all: To the Israelites God claimed his acts of deliverance in Exodus 20:2, “I am the Lord your God who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery.” To all the people in the New Testament, God says about the coming of a Savior in Matthew 1:21, “She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.” None of all founders of other religions has claimed that he came to his world to save the soul of anyone, not even his own. All the founders of religions are human beings and are included in the category of sinners. Our God is the only God who came to

save sinners from their sins. This is a tremendous position of authority to be the first of all things and gods man may create. Our God, in Jesus, died to pay the price of the sins of all men. None other religious founder has claimed to have died to pay for the sin of anyone, not even for his own sins.

3) This true God will judge us all: When Paul presented the gospel message to the Corinthians, he says, “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive what is due him for the things he had done while in the body, whether good or bad.” (2 Cor. 5:10) Judgment is real and we all need to pay attention on this. Since our God is the only righteous God who is worthy to judge all men, includes the religious founders. For this reason, this true God deserves the first over and above anyone or anything.

WAYS TO EXALT GOD FIRST: There are too many ways we can do to exalt God first in our lives. Here are a few we can start to practice:

1) God first in our goals of life: Paul gave his testimony on the change of his goals of life, he says, “But whatever was to my profit, I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord.” (Phil 3:7-8) I am not saying we all can do what Paul did in resetting the goals of life like him, but I do believe that as children of God, we all need to reset our goals of life unlike people in the world do. We need to set God as our first pursuit as Jesus wanted us to do “Seek you first the kingdom of God and all these shall be given to you.” (Matt 6:33) This is the first and the utmost God loves to see in us as his children.

2) God first object of our love: God loves to see his children love him and he was offended when they don't. In writing to the church at Ephesus, God told the people in that church, with all the good things they had done, "Yet I hold this against you: You have forsaken your first love." (Rev 2:4) All the good things they, or we, have done doesn't measure to the one thing God sees it as the most important: Make God the first we love. In reality, very few, if any, of God's people put God as the first of their love. We love many people and many things plus God, and think that is OK, but that isn't OK. God wants to be the first of our affection, the object of our primary love. When Paul talked about this subject of loving God, he used very strong words on those who do not love God first: "If anyone does not love the Lord, a curse be on him." (1 Corinth 16:22) This is one serious word Paul used on those who don't love God, and he didn't use this word lightly.

3) God first object of our loyalty: In many admirable communities of life such as the family, military, friendship, marriage and the like, loyalty is deemed as the adhering factor that keeps the bond inseparable and strong. That should also be the bond between the Lord and his followers, us. When Paul explained his unfaltering loyalty to the Lord, he said, "If we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord. So, whether we live or die, we belong to the Lord." (Romans 14:8) This is the kind of loyalty we need to have to the Lord God by whom we were saved and to whom we serve. On the never ending loyalty Paul had to the Lord, he says, "For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future nor any power, neither height nor depth, not anything else in creation, will be

bale to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (Romans 8:38-39) This is the kind of loyalty God deserves and desires from us.

WHAT CAN WE DO NOW?

1) Follow the word of Jesus: We all claim to be followers of the Lord Jesus, so, we are to follow his words. When he was asked what is the greatest of all commandments in the law, Jesus replied, “The most important one is this: O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.” (Mark 12:29-30) This is what it takes to put God first in our lives and in all we do. When we make a decision, choose a path, or pursue a goal or anything else, we need to ask this question: If God is first in this?

2) God knows if He is first in you: We need to always remember that God is all knowing, and he knows if we put him first in our life. Paul told us that “The man who loves God is known by God.” (1 Corinth 8:3) This means we can't hide from God's eye if he is first in our lives. This may give us a double warning or encouragement: Warning: God knows if we don't put Him first and He will deal with us accordingly. On the other hand, if we do put him first in all we do, He also knows and will reward us also accordingly. Putting God first isn't something we suffer loss, but everything we may gain if we do.