

## Biblical Theology by Dr. Chuck Baynard

### Lesson 34 (HCLD 35)<sup>1</sup>

**Preparation:** Begin and end each study time with prayer. Pay particular attention to the background reading and pray over each passage asking God to reveal Himself to you.

**Background Reading:** Read all the Scripture verses in footnote # 1 & 2.

**Question:** What are the duties required in the second commandment?

**Answer:** 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;[1] particularly prayer and thanksgiving in the name of Christ;[2] the reading, preaching, and hearing of the word;[3] the administration and receiving of the sacraments;[4] church government and discipline;[5] the ministry and maintenance thereof;[6] religious fasting;[7] swearing by the name of God,[8] and vowing unto him:[9] as also the disapproving, detesting, opposing, all false worship;[10] and, according to each one's place and calling, removing it, and all monuments of idolatry.[11]<sup>2</sup>

The Westminster Divines continue to order under the ten headings of the commandments all the rest of Scripture so that in effect under these ten heads we have a systematic approach to the Bible that by proof text puts before man all the duties and commands of God. There are many that would set aside text proofing as an invalid approach and deny it value in exegesis. Such persons could never be more removed from the truth of the Bible itself. As the only truth in existence, and in accordance with one of the first rules of the reformed church, the Bible is the primary instrument by which we must interpret the Scriptures. By making a statement, then by using the proof text from the Bible to show this is no mere imagination of the creature but has been spoken by God Himself, the most accurate of answer has been given. That there are those who rather turn to exposition and the philosophy of the created to better

#### <sup>1</sup> The Heidelberg Catechism, Lord's Day 35

Q96: What does God require in the second Commandment?

A96: That we in no way make any image of God,[a] nor worship Him in any other way than He has commanded us in His Word.[b]

a. Deut. 4:15-19; Isa. 40:18, 25; Rom. 1:22-24; Acts 17:29

b. I Sam. 15:23; Deut. 4:23-24; 12:30-32; Matt. 15:9; John 4:24

Q97: May we not make any image at all?

A97: God may not and cannot be imaged in any way; as for creatures, though they may indeed be imaged, yet God forbids the making or keeping of any likeness of them, either to worship them or to serve God by them.[c]

c. Exod. 23:24-25; 34:13-14; Deut. 7:5; 12:3; 16:22; II Kings 18:4; John 1:18

Q98: But may not pictures be tolerated in churches as books for the people?

A98: No, for we should not be wiser than God, who will not have His people taught by dumb idols,[d] but by the lively preaching of His Word.[e]

d. Jer. 10:8; Hab. 2:18-19

e. II Peter 1:19; II Tim. 3:16-17; Rom. 10:17

<sup>2</sup> 1. Deut. 32:46-47; Matt. 28:30; Acts 2:42; I Tim. 6:13-14

2. Phil. 4:6; Eph. 5:20

3. Deut. 17:18-19; Acts 10:88; 15:21; II Tim. 4:2; James 1:21-22

4. Matt. 28:19; I Cor. 11:23-30

5. Matt. 16:19; 18:15-17; I Cor. ch. 5; 12:28

6. Eph. 4:11-12; I Tim. 5:17-18; I Cor. 9:1-15

7. Joel 2:12-13; I Cor. 7:5

8. Deut. 6:13

9. Isa. 19:21; Psa. 76:11

10. Acts 17:16-17; Psa. 16:4

11. Deut. 7:5; Isa. 30:22

understand what God has said does not diminish the truth of what God has placed before us. Without the proof texts the Westminster Standards are but another product of man with no merit above a secular dictionary. Though preachers are want to turn every word over and examine both sides, as they should as the teachers appointed by God in the church, the power is not from the explanation of what God has said, but His own word delivered in truth and power of the Holy Spirit. While the listener may gain insight from such presentations, they too must return to the Word to let God speak to them as to where these things be true, even as the Bereans did in the first church.

We find the heart of this list of duties in its original context mixed among the list of duties the Westminster Assembly point to, disapproving, detesting, opposing all false worship; and, according to each ones place and calling, removing it, and all monuments of idolatry. Thus the negative sanction of the commandment that prohibits idolatry here finds positive action on the part of the believer, who according to his place in society, or the church he must labor to oppose and even remove all forms of idolatry he observes. In question ninety-nine of the Westminster Larger Catechism we understand that there is both a positive and negative side to all of God's commands and what was clearly implied was to be accorded the same obedience as that which was spoken of explicitly. Here then the Westminster Assembly in accordance with their own rules present in each commandment both the commands and that which can be clearly implied from the words of Scripture as well as present both the negative and positive of the issue before us. In the section of each question labeled duties we find the positive application of the negative command found in the commandment as given to Moses.

Here and more particularly in the next question we also find the roots of the so-called Regulative Principle of Worship. That is what God has not commanded is to be forbidden in the worship of the church. I find in this conclusion more of the reaction of the Divines against both the Roman Catholic Church and the Church of England than against the freedom Christ brought to us in the New Testament. I do know that it was never the intent of the Westminster Divines for their words of explanation and putting forth the Scriptures under these ten heads to give to one the weapon to rule over another as being more pure and righteous. This is the result I see most often as this principle know as the RPW is brought before the courts of the church time and again to deny freedom to the congregation to worship God in truth and spirit. I doubt not that many and perhaps most will disagree with my understanding of things on this point. That be as it is, I stand where I stand planted on the firm word of God, and say to such, the burden lies in your court to prove me wrong. This was not the intent of the Westminster Divines and the confession needs no modification, but rather the modern to understand from whence the Westminster Divines came and what was the intent of the original authors of this work. I submit that the intent was more to say that what God does not forbid is permissible, ever remembering Paul's words to the church of Corinth that all was to be done decently and in order.

I dare say that in the church today a congregation as diverse and with the open practice of worship we see in the church of Corinth would find its elders deposed and a commission of the next higher court in charge of things until this heresy was removed from their midst. I can only feel sad for the brother who finds the commandments of God to be such a burden, and pray the Lord complete his sanctification and open his eyes to the real liberty we have in Christ. I refuse to bow to such highhanded tactics and place myself back under a burden that is more confining and burdensome than that of the Pharisees. I find no need for worship police in the church and find no such office ordained of God. The elders of each local church being appointed in that place to oversee the worship of that house of the Lord should have the liberty to worship as the culture of the people demands unless it runs afoul of the Scripture itself, not what some believe the proper method of worship should be.

I submit that if this were so the Westminster Divines could not have preached, and would never have been able to sit in the assembly that penned this great document. Why so? Because the majority of them were not Presbyterian ministers and the Scots present did not even have a vote. They were clergy in the Church of England. Had they held to such a tight entrance into true worship as those who came after them would allow they did, how I ask could they with clear conscience pen this document that would condemn much of the liturgy and worship in their own church as originating with Satan and not of God. It is either one or the other that is it is of Satan or God. While the intent was to bring reform to the Church of England Church of England, it is also a truth that at the moment they penned the document they condemned themselves if we accept the RPW view of worship. I think not, and that we need look

elsewhere to understand then what this commandment lists as the duty we have under it. This is more clearly defined in the next question and we will take a closer look at the RPW there.

Here as noted the, the agenda before us is idolatry. We see God has forbidden it and our duty then is to oppose such worship of another and to remove the means thereof if in our power to do so. I understand the opposition and removing of idols, however using their own proof text I don't agree that this is limited by ones place and calling. The proof text from Deut. 7:5 deals with the taking of the land for a possession and is addressed to all the people and is a call to separate from the other nations, and in verse five deals with the completion of the cleansing of the land, the people to whom these idols belong already having been completely destroyed. As it stands alone then this passage was for Israel on one particular point, possession of the Promised Land, and is not proper proof text here. If we move this forward as a principle, then it is addressed to all people with no conditioning as to place or calling. This I would have problems doing, for we are told in another place to live at peace with all, so much as be in us. Were this the mandate of Scripture we would need immediately repent and declare war on most nations of the world and the majority of its people as with the force of the sword all other gods, and monuments to them were torn down. Thus the limiting to place and calling is a wise addition, but in my opinion it is an addition and is on very shaky ground. Indeed we are our brother's keeper if we are speaking of believers and are to admonish one another. If we are speaking of the secular world around us, another rule would come into use whereby we obey the civil law of the place where God has providentially placed us. Even so, at the risk of death itself we must at least attempt to remove the idols by exposing them for what they are which can be tied to the Scriptural mandate to speak the truth in love. Finding that place of perspective and holding the whole of God's revealed will in proper balance can be a delicate balancing act. Nonetheless, we do not disobey civil authority unless it forbids worship of the true God of heaven. For context consider the acts of Daniel in the book by his name in the Old Testament. Daniel bows to the ruler of the land in all except worship. Daniel doesn't try to tear down idols or lead others to disobey, but under penalty of death continues to properly worship God.

There is a Regulative Principle of Worship as such, Paul gave it to us in 1 Cor. 14 where we read all things are to be done decently and in order. Where Scripture does not prohibit I believe we have liberty. There is a tremendous freedom or liberty in Christ that we must not relinquish to any rule of any man, of the church or otherwise. The Bible alone is the only rule of faith and practice. Where God has remained silent, there is definitely liberty given.

### Suggested Sermon Outline

## **Picture God**

### **What does God require in the Second Commandment?**

That we should not represent Him or worship Him in any other manner than He has commanded in His word.

### **Should we, then, not make any images at all?**

God cannot and should not be pictured in any way. As for creatures, although they may indeed be portrayed, God forbids making or having any likeness of them in order to worship them, or to use them to serve Him.

## **But may not pictures be tolerated in churches in place of books for unlearned people?**

No, for we must not try to be wiser than God Who does not want His people to be taught by means of lifeless idols, but through the living preaching of His Word.

### **I. How Should People Worship God?**

**A. God teaches believers to find the answers to their questions about Him and how to approach Him in the Bible.** All scripture *is* given by inspiration of God, and *is* profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works. (2 TIMOTHY 3:16-17)

**B. Since the Bible is even more reliable than direct personal revelation, the directions in Scripture overrule all other ideas.** We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts: (2 PETER 1:19)

**C. Examine the implications of inventing your own ways to worship God.** What profiteth the graven image that the maker thereof hath graven it; the molten image, and a teacher of lies, that the maker of his work trusteth therein, to make dumb idols? Woe unto him that saith to the wood, Awake; to the dumb stone, Arise, it shall teach! Behold, it *is* laid over with gold and silver, and *there is* no breath at all in the midst of it. But the LORD *is* in his holy temple: let all the earth keep silence before him. (HABAKKUK 2:18-20)

**D. Jeremiah's era helps believers focus on basic truths -- reformation follows pairing away the pleasant accretions of the world.** But they are altogether brutish and foolish: the stock *is* a doctrine of vanities. (JEREMIAH 10:8)

**C. Why would WORSHIP, which is so personally close to God, be different from the other areas of Christ's lordship?** And it shall be said in that day, Lo, *this is our God; we have waited for him, and he will save us: this is the LORD; we have waited for him, we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation.* (ISAIAH 25:9) For *the LORD is our judge, the LORD is our lawgiver, the LORD is our king; he will save us.* (ISAIAH 33:22)

### **II. How Narrow-minded Is God about Worship?**

**A. God treats any likeness of Him, which people can produce, from their energy and effort as a misrepresentation by definition.** Forasmuch then as we are the offspring of God, *we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man's device.* (ACTS 17:29)

**B. If there were some latitude on the issue wouldn't it show up in Deuteronomy where God outlined His Law? *Take ye therefore good heed unto yourselves; for ye saw no manner of similitude on the day that the LORD spake unto you in Horeb out of the midst of the fire: Lest ye corrupt yourselves, and make you a graven image*, the similitude of any figure, the likeness of male or female, The likeness of any beast that *is* on the earth, the likeness of any winged fowl that flieth in the air, The likeness of any thing that creepeth on the ground, the likeness of any fish that *is* in the waters beneath the earth: ***And lest thou lift up thine eyes unto heaven***, and when thou seest the sun, and the moon, and the stars, *even* all the host of heaven, ***shouldest be driven to worship them, and serve them***, which the LORD thy God hath divided unto all nations under the whole heaven. (DEUTERONOMY 4:15-19 )**

Instead, God warns against things, which even might tempt us to false worship.

**C. The pathetic state of contemporary society relates directly to the violation of the second commandment. For *the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness*; Because *that which may be known of God is manifest* in them; for *God hath shewed it* unto them. For *the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen*, being understood by the things that are made, *even his eternal power and Godhead*; so that they are without excuse: Because that, *when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened*. PROFESSING THEMSELVES TO BE WISE, THEY BECAME FOOLS, **AND CHANGED THE GLORY OF THE UNCORRUPTIBLE GOD INTO AN IMAGE** made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things. ***Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves***: WHO CHANGED THE TRUTH OF GOD INTO A LIE, AND WORSHIPPED AND SERVED THE CREATURE MORE THAN THE CREATOR, who is blessed for ever. Amen. ***For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections***: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature: And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and ***receiving in themselves that recompence of their error which was meet***. AND EVEN AS THEY DID NOT LIKE TO RETAIN GOD IN *THEIR* KNOWLEDGE, GOD GAVE THEM OVER TO A REPROBATE MIND, TO DO THOSE THINGS WHICH ARE NOT CONVENIENT; (ROMANS 1:18-28)**

### III. Ambiguous Worship Is Dangerous

**A. Watch your step C the world's bright ideas are snares which trap those who are not focused on Jesus. *Take heed to thyself that thou be not snared by following them*, after that they be destroyed from before thee; and that thou enquire not after their gods, saying, How did these nations serve their gods? even so will I do likewise. Thou shalt not do so unto the LORD thy God: ***for every abomination to the LORD, which he hateth, have they done unto their gods; for even their sons and their daughters they have burnt in the fire to their gods***. WHAT THING SOEVER I COMMAND YOU, OBSERVE TO DO IT: THOU SHALT NOT ADD THERETO, NOR DIMINISH FROM IT. (DEUTERONOMY 12:30-32)**

**B. Neglecting God's ways for your own is vacuous. But *in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men*. (MATTHEW 15:9)**