

Biblical Theology by Dr. Chuck Baynard

Lesson 35 (HCLD 31)¹

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 # 2.

Question: What are the sins forbidden in the second commandment?

Answer: The sins forbidden in the second commandment are, all devising,[1] counseling,[2] commanding,[3] using,[4] and anywise approving, any religious worship not instituted by God himself;[5] tolerating a false religion;[6] the making any representation of God, of all or of any of the three persons, either inwardly in our mind, or outwardly in any kind of image or likeness of any creature whatsoever;[7] all worshiping of it,[8] or God in it or by it;[9] the making of any representation of feigned deities,[10] and all worship of them, or service belonging to them;[11] all superstitious devices,[12] corrupting the worship of God,[13] adding to it, or taking from it,[14] whether invented and taken up of ourselves,[15] or received by tradition from others,[16] though under the title of antiquity,[17] custom,[18] devotion,[19] good intent, or any other pretense whatsoever;[20] simony;[21] sacrilege;[22] all neglect,[23] contempt,[24] hindering,[25] and opposing the worship and ordinances which God hath appointed.[26]²

Here we find the elusive Regulative Principle of Worship in all her glory. The Westminster Divines make the statement and use the proof text chosen by those of all ages since to limit to the worship of God to those things which are expressly commanded by God for worship, all else being condemned in light of this passage (Deut. 12:30-32). I do not accept this infringement upon the freedom given in Christ to worship him in truth and spirit. I could handle the "Lutheran" view better than this presentation, that is, all

¹ The Heidelberg Catechism, Lord's Day 31

Q83: What is the Office of the Keys?

A83: The preaching of the Holy Gospel and Christian discipline; by these two the kingdom of heaven is opened to believers and shut against unbelievers.[1]

1. Matt. 16:18-19; 18:18; John 20:23; Luke 24:46-47; I Cor. 1:23-24

Q84: How is the kingdom of heaven opened and shut by the preaching of the Holy Gospel?

A84: In this way: that, according to the command of Christ, it is proclaimed and openly witnessed to believers, one and all, that as often as they accept with true faith the promise of the Gospel, all their sins are really forgiven them of God for the sake of Christ's merits; and on the contrary, to all unbelievers and hypocrites, that the wrath of God and eternal condemnation abide on them so long as they are not converted.[1] According to this testimony of the Gospel, God will judge men both in this life and in that which is to come.

1. John 8:24; 20:21-23; Acts 10:43; Isa. 58:1; II Cor. 2:15-16

Q85: How is the kingdom of heaven shut and opened by Christian discipline?

A85: In this way: that, according to the command of Christ, if any under the Christian name show themselves unsound either in doctrine or life, and after several brotherly admonition do not turn from their errors or evil ways, they are complained of to the Church or to its proper officers; and, if they neglect to hear them also, are by them denied the holy sacraments and thereby excluded from the Christian communion, and by God Himself from the kingdom of Christ; and if they promise and show real amendment, they are again received as members of Christ and His Church.[1]

1. Matt. 18:15-18; I Cor. 5:3-5, 11; II Thess. 3:14-15; II John 1:10-11

² 1. Num. 15:39 2. Deut. 13:6-8 3. Hosea 5:11; Micah 6:16 4. I Kings 11:33; 12:33 5. Deut. 12:30-32 6. Deut. 13:6-12; Zech. 13:2-3; Rev. 2:2, 14-15, 20, Rev. 17:12, 16-17 7. Deut. 4:15-19; Acts 17:29; Rom. 1:21-23, 25 8. Dan. 3:18; Gal. 4:8 9. Exod. 32:5 10. Exod. 32:8 11. I Kings 18:26, 28; Isa. 65:11 12. Acts 17:22; Col. 2:21-23 13. Mal. 1:7-8, 14 14. Deut. 4:2 15. Psa. 106:39 16. Matt. 15:9 17. I Peter 1:18 18. Jer. 44:17 19. Isa. 65:3-5; Gal. 1:13-14 20. I Sam. 13:11-12; 15:21 21. Acts 8:18 22. Rom. 2:22; Mal. 3:8 23. Exod. 4:24-26 24. Matt. 22:5; Mal. 1:7, 13 25. Matt. 23:13 26. Acts 13:44-45; I Thess. 2:15-16

things not expressly forbidden are permissible. I do not think I infringe upon the intent of the Westminster Divines here, though I do know this will not sit well with many of my brothers in Christ. So be it, they do not understand the intent of the Westminster Divines, nor do they correctly apply the word of God in the fullness of the context given. Bold statements? Yes, but not ones I do not think can be vindicated by the Scriptures themselves and the use of sound biblical application of same.

First those who would expound this RPW isolate the proof text from its proper context. Apart from the context in which the words were originally given they mean absolutely nothing to the believer in either the Old or New Testament. This verse, which is the very heart of their argument has nothing to do with regulation in the sense they rip it from place and context and set before us. We are dealing here with the worship of the ancient church in the wilderness which in the covenant of God had been allowed to set up altars and worship God whenever and wherever they were. The change has to do with the system of sacrifice and temple worship and nothing to do with sacred assemblies. God from the beginning has called for a blood sacrifice in the atonement for sin. Thus we read elsewhere that without the shedding of blood there is no atonement. This passage is a paradigm shift in the sacrificial system of the Hebrew people. From anywhere and anyone they find both the place and the persons making the sacrifice have become limited. This setting the nation of Israel further apart from the culture in which they existed. They have one God. They have one altar, they have one holy of holies. Compare this to all other cultures of the day. They have been marked and set apart from the nations by God for His own purpose and to maintain their status as the children of the covenant they cannot leave off or add to these commandments of God concerning how and where they will offer sacrifices. Jesus Christ Himself sets this aside in a conversation with an outsider, a Samaritan whom God will call back into the covenant with the spilled blood of His own Son. Christ comments to this lady that the day will come when the place of worship is no longer limited (John 4:23). The shift under the law, given for the purpose of being a school master, to reveal sin, has now moved back in the other direction, as man is once more called to worship God in truth and spirit. I believe the removal of this one verse from the hands of those who would so tightly regulate the worship of God destroys their whole position. Without this one text their whole theory crumbles as bricks of unbaked mud.

What then was the intent of the Westminster Divines in presenting this statement and this proof text? First the Westminster Divines did not use just this one proof text, but some 26 points as noted above. Second they were attempting to remove the practice of the Church of Rome received by tradition, which they specifically mention. They are forbidding the setting up as saints and other martyrs in the church to be prayed to (worshiped) and calling for the removal of all the Icons that so embellished all the places of worship until the reformation. They are seeking a return to the simple and pure worship of the first church, which met in homes more often than buildings set aside for worship. They are returning to the place Christ said worship would move, in the heart of God's people performed before God in truth and spirit. Reread the complete laundry list of things forbidden in the statement of the Westminster Divines. What one forbidden thing according to this statement is not a direct confrontation with the practice of the Roman Church, and in many ways the Church of England? Here is the purpose of the Divines, not to place further restrictions on the reformed church that do not appear in Scripture.

The purity and simplicity of the Puritan mind would not call for such restrictions. They above all others I believe understood the covenant of grace and the doctrine of grace and would not have been so bold as to violate one word of the Sacred Writ. Though they may have been guilty of other things, the misapplication of the Scriptures as we see done by those who today espouse the RPW was far from them. If such existed to the Puritans it was that there was a Reformed Principle of Worship that unlike the moderns pertained to all things, polity, doctrine, worship, and life. How often do we hear those of the Regulativists indicate that it is silly of some to try and say the RPW applies to life, it concerns worship alone? The Puritan principle of interpretation would have stopped such an effort cold, for context cannot be bypassed in their system of approaching the Scriptures; what does it say, what does it mean, what must I do about it? They could not stop with the first two, for it was God's word and that Holy Word demands action taken on the part of the hearer. These are the forefathers of the Reformed church I know and love, not this strict disciplinarian some would have me believe they were.

What freedom, what joy then are ours. We can bask in the light and beauty of our creator singing praises to His holy name wherever, and whenever we are so led of the Spirit. God has taken the massive volume of worship under the oldest system of the natural law, funneled it into the forerunner of the true worship of the New Testament for the purpose of setting apart His people and preparing the way to that one last sacrifice of His own Son, once and for all. With the tearing asunder of the veil the worship of God once more moved from the holy of holies and the shadow of death to the fullness of the gracious covenant we have in Christ. How precious and beautiful then the words we find in John 1:5 which speaks of the coming of Christ as light into a dark world. To whom did Christ initially appear? To whom was His ministry? Who was His own? John speaks of the worship then of the Jews as being darkness. Christ did not come to all of the world as some would sing, but to the lost sheep of Israel first, as light bursting forth in the shadows, to drive away the last place of concealment of the remnants of the law and its restricted worship and practice of sacrifice. The sacrifice He fulfilled with the offering of Himself who was not sin, for sin, and the darkness was forever shattered in the torn veil in the Jewish temple. Thus we continually see the reference to the light that lifted the mystery of the type and shadow of the former into the glorious day of the revelation of the Son of God.

That which God forbids, do not. That which is of good and edifies has only one limitation and that set in the New Testament whereby we read Let all things be done decently and in order (1 Cor. 14:40). Here then we can take the ordering of the Scriptures under this head and see those things that are forbidden, and know a true Reformed (regulative) Principle of Worship, not the shadow and hype that would bind the conscience of man so that worship in truth and spirit is so hindered as to be almost impossible. God calls all of His people everywhere to worship and prayer, in truth and spirit, freed from the burdens of the law. It is the completion of this manifestation of the sons of God that all of creation awaits, that the curse will be no more. In the words of John in the book of Revelation there will be no more sea (Rev. 21:1). The morning star has risen, the Day Spring arrived, and in the words of the apostle John we can find comfort and freedom to worship God as He has intended from before the foundation of the earth; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free (John 8:32). My friends let no man set upon your shoulders a burden that is not of God, and the Son has arisen and we know the truth, we are free. Don't be like the Pharisees of the day of Christ and ask how can we be free, for we have never been in bondage. This spoken by men who at that very moment had the boot of Rome upon their throat, who except for relatively short periods of time had not known physical freedom, much less spiritual. The bondage of sin has been destroyed, and it no longer has power over the saints. Live then in this glorious light of the risen Lord.

How fantastically beautiful is the fit of the TULIP into this picture of freedom in Christ then. Here we find that all is of God and His grace. The commandments are not a burden, not a restriction, but a gift of grace. This is where the Westminster Divines were coming from, not an attempt to replace the practices of the church with yet another set of prescribed worship practices, but to let the freedom of the Son loose in the church. God having never required anything of us He did not first give, in the Son we have truth, and that truth sets us free. It is only thus with the enablement of the ever present Holy Spirit that Christ's commandment to love all can be kept, and we find then there is a true seed upon the earth,

for it is written if you love me you will keep my commandments. I hate vain thoughts; but thy law do I love (Ps. 119:113). Or, in the words of Christ, If you love me, keep my commandments (John 14:15). All is of grace, and that of God. How pure and sweet this beautiful pattern of worship and love given to us by God through the light of His Son, Jesus Christ. How then like the Galatians can we so easily be drawn aside to think that Christ would make of the freedom we have in His truth, to again take up the burden not only of the old law, but add even another volume thereto?

Suggested Sermon Outline

The Keys of the Kingdom

What is the office of the keys?

The preaching of the holy gospel and Christian discipline. By these two means the kingdom of heaven is opened to believers and shut against unbelievers.

How is the kingdom of heaven opened and shut by the preaching of the holy gospel.

In this way: The kingdom of heaven is opened when it is proclaimed and openly testified to believers, one and all, according to the command of Christ, that as often as they accept the promise of the gospel with true faith all their sins are truly forgiven them by God for the sake of Christ's gracious work. On the contrary, the wrath of God and eternal condemnation fall upon all unbelievers and hypocrites as long as they do not repent. It is according to this witness of the gospel that God will judge the one and the other in this life and in the life to come.

How is the kingdom of heaven shut and opened by Christian discipline?

In this way: Christ commanded that those who bear the Christian name in an unchristian way either in doctrine or in life should be given brotherly admonition. If they do not give up their errors or evil ways, notification is given to the church or those ordained for this by the church. Then, if they do not change after this warning, they are forbidden to partake of the holy sacraments and are thus excluded from the communion of the church and by God Himself from the kingdom of Christ. However, if thy promise and show real amendment, they are received again as members of Christ and of the church.

I. There Are Keys to the Kingdom of Heaven

A. Jesus introduced the term KEYS OF THE KINGDOM. And *I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven*: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. (MATTHEW 16:19)

B. They keys have actual — not merely symbolic — value. *Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained.* (JOHN 20:23)

II. Gospel Preaching Is Effective

A. Christ connected preaching and the growth of the kingdom. Go ye therefore, and ***teach all nations, baptizing them*** in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: (MATTHEW 28:19)

B. Jesus sends His people in the way that His Father sent Him. Then said Jesus to them again, Peace *be* unto you: ***as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you.*** And when he had said this, he breathed on *them*, and saith unto them, ***Receive ye the Holy Ghost: Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained.*** (JOHN 20:21-23)

III. Church Discipline Is Effective

A. Jesus gave us a disciplinary process and backed it with His own authority. Moreover ***if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him*** his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But ***if he will not hear thee, then take with thee*** one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And ***if he shall neglect*** to hear them, ***tell it unto the church:*** but ***if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican.*** Verily I say unto you, ***Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.*** (MATTHEW 18:15-18)

B. God settles accounts, but the church is directed to police itself. But now I ***have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator,*** or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one no not to eat. For ***what have I to do to judge them also that are without? do not ye judge them that are within?*** But them that are without ***God judgeth.*** Therefore put ***away from among yourselves that wicked person.*** (1 CORINTHIANS 5:11-13)

C. Separating someone from the body of the church is a serious punishment. And *if any man obey not* our word by this epistle, *note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed.* (2 THESSALONIANS 3:14)

D. Those who repent deserve restoration in the same measure. I will *arise and go* to my father, and will say unto him, Father, *I have sinned* against heaven, and before thee, (LUKE 15:18)

1. Conviction of guilt is a terrible burden. The *sorrows of death compassed me, and the pains of hell gat hold upon me:* I found trouble and sorrow. *Then called I upon the name of the LORD; O LORD, I beseech thee, deliver my soul. Gracious is the LORD,* and righteous; yea, our God *is* merciful. *The LORD preserveth the simple:* I was brought low, and he helped me. *Return unto thy rest, O my soul; for the LORD hath dealt bountifully with thee.* (PSALM 116:3-7)

2. The sense of guilt led the publican to approach God in an effective way. And *the publican,* standing afar off, would not lift up so much as *his* eyes unto heaven, but *smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner.* (LUKE 18:13)

E. Disciple is designed to correct people rather than to get rid of them. Sufficient to such a man is this punishment, which was inflicted of many. So that contrariwise ye ought rather to forgive him, and comfort him, lest perhaps such a one should be swallowed up with overmuch sorrow. Wherefore I beseech you that ye would confirm your love toward him. For to this end also did I write, that I might know the proof of you, whether ye be obedient in all things. To whom ye forgive any thing, I forgive also: for if I forgave any thing, to whom I forgave it, for your sakes forgave I it in the person of Christ; Lest Satan should get an advantage of us: for we are not ignorant of his devices. (2 CORINTHIANS 2:6-11)