



²I am the LORD thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. ³Thou shalt have no other gods before me. ⁴Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: ⁵Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me; ⁶And shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments. (Ex 20:2-6)

We are presented, in the first two Commandments of God, a single coin of the Realm of Heaven – only two separate sides thereof. On the front side is the first Commandment of God informing us of the fact that it is He who has brought us thus far in life and spirit, and He is the One and only God. The obverse side of the coin informs us of the contrary principle of who, or what, is NOT God. We are to worship the One, Triune God, and no other. So what is the ‘other?’ ⁴ *Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth:* ⁵ *Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them.* Those who have not the Lord for their god will make themselves a god, whether of philosophical atheism, of money, of sex, drugs, or whatever. The prohibition is not against mere images that are works of art, or inventions of the mind for good, but rather what value we place upon them as articles, or venues, of worship. Anything made with hands – even church buildings – are not to be revered. It is rather the unseen God that we worship at the altars of the human heart that we owe our faith and allegiance. Gold bullion is made with hands; diamonds are cut and crafted by human hands; mansions of opulence are built by human hands; so are Lamborghinis. Immoral sexual inclinations are born in a corrupt human heart. Many varied things of this world can become our god – even the denial that there be a god can become our obsession and false god.

God built a safety net into His First Commandment. If we adhere strictly to the first, we can in no wise fail to keep inviolate the Second. He is not ‘A’ Lord thy God! He is ‘THE’ Lord thy God. If He is YOUR God, all others are discounted. In the first instant, God agrees to be our God and our Father giving His fatherly care, love, forgiveness, and protection while He expects us to render that which is due a Sovereign Lord – obedience to His Law. Even lesser government of the secular arm expects her laws to be obeyed. Should we do less for the Lord of Glory? We are to keep His Commandments and serve Him alone. Here, again, we see two dimensions of that same

principle: Obey and we are beneficiaries of His blessing:

AND it shall come to pass, if thou shalt hearken diligently unto the voice of the LORD thy God, to observe and to do all his commandments which I command thee this day, that the LORD thy God will set thee on high above all nations of the earth: ²And all these blessings shall come on thee, and overtake thee, if thou shalt hearken unto the voice of the LORD thy God. ³Blessed shalt thou be in the city, and blessed shalt thou be in the field. ⁴Blessed shall be the fruit of thy body, and the fruit of thy ground, and the fruit of thy cattle, the increase of thy kine, and the flocks of thy sheep. ⁵Blessed shall be thy basket and thy store. ⁶Blessed shalt thou be when thou comest in, and blessed shalt thou be when thou goest out. ⁷The LORD shall cause thine enemies that rise up against thee to be smitten before thy face: they shall come out against thee one way, and flee before thee seven ways. ⁸The LORD shall command the blessing upon thee in thy storehouses, and in all that thou settest thine hand unto; and he shall bless thee in the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee. ⁹The LORD shall establish thee an holy people unto himself, as he hath sworn unto thee, if thou shalt keep the commandments of the LORD thy God, and walk in his ways. ¹⁰And all people of the earth shall see that thou art called by the name of the LORD; and they shall be afraid of thee. ¹¹And the LORD shall make thee plenteous in goods, in the fruit of thy body, and in the fruit of thy cattle, and in the fruit of thy ground, in the land which the LORD swore unto thy fathers to give thee. ¹²The LORD shall open unto thee his good treasure, the heaven to give the rain unto thy land in his season, and to bless all the work of thine hand: and thou shalt lend unto many nations, and thou shalt not borrow. ¹³And the LORD shall make thee the head, and not the tail; and thou shalt be above only, and thou shalt not be beneath; if that thou hearken unto the commandments of the LORD thy God, which I command thee this day, to observe and to do them: ¹⁴And thou shalt not go aside from any of the words which I command thee this day, to the right hand, or to the left, to go after other gods to serve them. (Deut 28:1-14)

But disobey, and the curses of Deuteronomy 28-30 become our plight. I will not bother to list all of the plagues and curses that befall the disobedient, but I will excerpt what appears to summarize the whole: *If thou wilt not observe to do all the words of this law that are written in this book, that thou mayest fear this glorious and fearful name, THE LORD THY GOD; Then the LORD will make thy plagues wonderful, and the plagues of thy seed, even great plagues, and of long continuance, and sore sicknesses, and of long continuance.* (Deut 28:58-59) For a more complete description of these terrible curses, read Deuteronomy 28:15 to the end of the chapter.

Love of God and His creatures is the motivating force that compels obedience to God. Dr. van Dyke wrote: *“There is something finer than to do right AGAINST inclination, and that is to have an inclination to do right. There is something nobler than reluctant obedience, and that is joyful obedience.”* Do we remember how joyful we were to obey our fathers when they asked us to help them to do some challenging project with them? When my mother first invited me to mow the lawn, how grateful I was, and how manly I felt. Unfortunately, that privilege became a routine obligation. Once our love fades and our obedience to God becomes a mere obligation, we have lost not only our joy, but the ability to obey Him.

The Second Commandment denies us the option to love ANYTHING more than God – or even as much as we love God. Not only are we not to bow down to statues and icons, but we are not to bow the knee to any desire apart from God. Idolatry is centered not upon graven images alone, but also desires and images graven in our minds and hearts. It is impossible to honor God by paying homage to those things that are part and parcel of His Creation – and that is EVERYTHING!

Do not forget that God is a jealous God! What does that mean? We are the center of His love and attraction as a people of faith. He considers us in the same light as a noble and upright young prince considers his betrothed bride to be the owner of his heart and the most beautiful of all fair ladies. When we turn to other entities to worship other than God, He feels jilted and is severely offended just as the young prince would feel if his betrothed darling became a harlot in the streets. (Sorry for the strong metaphors, but they are relevant.)

Of God, we must acknowledge, *It is He that hath made us, and not we ourselves.* Know ye that the LORD he is God: it is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves; we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture. (Psalms 100:3) What has given us greater value than the clay from which we are made? It is God who has given us a soul to be carried, for a time, in that clay body. *Woe unto them that seek deep to hide their counsel from the LORD, and their works are in the dark, and they say, Who seeth us? and who knoweth us? Surely your turning of things upside down shall be esteemed as the potter's clay: for shall the work say of him that made it, He made me not? or shall the thing framed say of him that framed it, He had no understanding?* (Isaiah 29:15-16) It would behoove us to remember that every contract is too-sided, and so is that covenant through which the Lord deals with His people.

Please consider the benediction to the Second Commandment: *I the LORD thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me; And shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments.* Certainly God does not visit the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unless they are inherited from the fathers. A drunken derelict may influence his children into the same life style. In fact, that is the normal case; however, there is an 'escape clause' in God's covenant with us: *And shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments.* Do you see the grace the door of which God leaves wide open to every child of wicked parents who turns and loves God and keeps His Commandment? Unfortunately, however, a child of wicked parents has a long and grueling road to righteous understanding. *Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is young, he will not depart from it* is a Proverb with direct bearing on the circumstances at hand.

My Closing Opinion: There have been many generations in America who have received blessings of God on behalf of their forefathers. Our fathers who built a great nation, under the Guiding Hand of God, trusted in the Lord. He has favored us perhaps more for their righteousness than for our lackluster obedience. But the coin is turning. There are rising up generations in our time who no longer love God and keep His Commandments. The road was short and dimly lighted to this situation, but I believe any American more than sixty years of age will observe the reality of what I say. God may be preparing to resort to that list of curses which He has reserved for those who turn away from Him and the Commandments He has given¹. If so, it may take more than a few generations to bring us from the banks of the Red Sea to the Promised Land again.

¹ Or it may be that the misfortune that will come upon us is no more than that which is natural to those who take the road into the pit. God need not curse us if we do what is harmful for us, the damage will occur as it is said, "By operation of law."