

Series: Striving Together for the Faith As a Family

GRAVEN IMAGE

EXODUS 20:4-6

Text: Exodus 20:4

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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:*

Introduction:

Last week we began looking at the passage of Scripture in the Old Testament that we refer to as the 10 commandments.

Too many folks believe that the Old Testament, and especially the section we are looking at right now, is no longer valid for today. However, I believe that it is of extreme importance that we have a standard of behavior.

Without God's standard, man determines what is right and what is wrong...and that is precisely why we are in such a mess today!

I want us to consider this commandment and see how it helps us strive together for the faith as a family.

Note:

1. THE RESTRICTION (VS. 4)

Exodus 20:4

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:*

This is very clearly a restriction and not a suggestion.

Notice we have here:

A. A Command to follow

God says, in no uncertain terms, that producing an image intended to receive worship is forbidden!

Not only do we have “A Command to Follow” but also:

B. A Custom to Flee

Since the early days of man’s civilization, man has invented for himself idols, and representations of his concept of God, to worship.

Idolatry always seemed to be Israel’s weakness. This was first seen in Exodus 32:

Exodus 32:1-14

1 And when the people saw that Moses delayed to come down out of the mount, the people gathered themselves together unto Aaron, and said unto him, Up, make us gods, which shall go before us; for as for this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him. 2 And Aaron said unto them, Break off the golden earrings, which are in the ears of your wives, of your sons, and of your daughters, and bring them unto me. 3 And all the people brake off the golden earrings which were in their ears, and brought them unto Aaron. 4 And he received them at their hand, and fashioned it with a graving tool, after he had made it a molten calf: and they said, These be thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt. 5 And when Aaron saw it, he built an altar before it; and Aaron made proclamation, and said, To morrow is a feast to the LORD. 6 And they rose up early on the morrow, and offered burnt offerings, and brought peace offerings; and the people sat down to eat and to drink, and rose up to play. 7 And the LORD said unto Moses, Go, get thee down; for thy people, which thou broughtest out of the land of Egypt, have corrupted themselves: 8 They have turned aside quickly out of the way which I commanded them: they have made them a molten calf, and have worshipped it, and have sacrificed thereunto, and said, These be thy gods, O Israel, which have brought thee up out of the land of Egypt. 9 And the LORD said unto Moses, I have seen this people, and,

behold, it is a stiffnecked people: 10 Now therefore let me alone, that my wrath may wax hot against them, and that I may consume them: and I will make of thee a great nation. 11 And Moses besought the LORD his God, and said, LORD, why doth thy wrath wax hot against thy people, which thou hast brought forth out of the land of Egypt with great power, and with a mighty hand? 12 Wherefore should the Egyptians speak, and say, For mischief did he bring them out, to slay them in the mountains, and to consume them from the face of the earth? Turn from thy fierce wrath, and repent of this evil against thy people. 13 Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, thy servants, to whom thou swarest by thine own self, and saidst unto them, I will multiply your seed as the stars of heaven, and all this land that I have spoken of will I give unto your seed, and they shall inherit it for ever. 14 And the LORD repented of the evil which he thought to do unto his people.

Israel's idolatry was rooted in the fact that their hearts were turned away from the Lord.

They tried to spiritualize their error by equating the worship of the calf with worship of the true God.

Note:

When a person needs some image or representation of God to assist in worship, it is a sure indicator of a lack in the spiritual life of that individual.

Not only do we have “A Restriction” but note also:

2. THE REASON

As I often state – God does all that He does with reason and purpose.

Note the reason for the restriction.

A. Their Inferior Nature

No matter how hard man tries, he can never properly represent God. After all, God is a Spirit – John 4:24.

John 4:24

²⁴ God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.

Man, in his zeal to worship and honor God, has sought to flatter Him by producing images of Him. However, the Almighty cannot be limited to stone, wood, plastic or some paint on canvas.

As hard as man might try, he can never properly depict God.

Note not only “Their Inferior Nature” but also:

B. Their Invading Nature

Exodus 20:5

⁵ Thou 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;

God is a jealous God. The Israelites were God’s people and He would tolerate no idols or false gods to be put before Him.

We must search our hearts and lives to see if we have removed everything that would insert itself ahead of God in our lives.

Not only do we see “The Restriction” and the Reason” but note also note:

3. THE RESULTS OF DISOBEDIENCE

We must remember that all actions end with some results.

Note the results of disobeying this restriction:

A. The Burden of God's Judgment

When we elevate anything or anyone to the place of God, we will find out too late that neither it, nor they, will be able to protect us from the wrath of God.

Psalm 59:17

¹⁷ Unto thee, O my strength, will I sing: for God is my defence, and the God of my mercy.

Judgment will always stalk the idolater!

Not only do we see "The Burden of God's Judgment" but also note:

B. The Blight on Succeeding Generations

God is not saying that he will punish the children for the parent's sins.

Deuteronomy 24:16

¹⁶ The fathers shall not be put to death for the children, neither shall the children be put to death for the fathers: every man shall be put to death for his own sin.

Ezekiel 18:19-32

¹⁹ Yet say ye, Why? doth not the son bear the iniquity of the father? When the son hath done that which is lawful and right, and hath kept all my statutes, and hath done them, he shall surely live. ²⁰ The soul that

sinneth, it shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son: the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him. ²¹ *But if the wicked will turn from all his sins that he hath committed, and keep all my statutes, and do that which is lawful and right, he shall surely live, he shall not die.* ²² *All his transgressions that he hath committed, they shall not be mentioned unto him: in his righteousness that he hath done he shall live.* ²³ *Have I any pleasure at all that the wicked should die? saith the Lord GOD: and not that he should return from his ways, and live?* ²⁴ *But when the righteous turneth away from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity, and doeth according to all the abominations that the wicked man doeth, shall he live? All his righteousness that he hath done shall not be mentioned: in his trespass that he hath trespassed, and in his sin that he hath sinned, in them shall he die.* ²⁵ *Yet ye say, The way of the Lord is not equal. Hear now, O house of Israel; Is not my way equal? are not your ways unequal?* ²⁶ *When a righteous man turneth away from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity, and dieth in them; for his iniquity that he hath done shall he die.* ²⁷ *Again, when the wicked man turneth away from his wickedness that he hath committed, and doeth that which is lawful and right, he shall save his soul alive.* ²⁸ *Because he considereth, and turneth away from all his transgressions that he hath committed, he shall surely live, he shall not die.* ²⁹ *Yet saith the house of Israel, The*

way of the Lord is not equal. O house of Israel, are not my ways equal? are not your ways unequal? ³⁰

Therefore I will judge you, O house of Israel, every one according to his ways, saith the Lord GOD. Repent, and turn yourselves from all your transgressions; so iniquity shall not be your ruin. ³¹ *Cast away from you all your transgressions, whereby ye have transgressed; and make you a new heart and a new spirit: for why will ye die, O house of Israel?* ³² *For I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord GOD: wherefore turn yourselves, and live ye.*

He is saying that sin leaves it's mark on our children! Children tend to resemble the environment they are exposed to.

Often, it takes generations to break the cycle established by the parent.

Not only do we see "The Restriction" "The Reason" and "Results of Disobedience" but note lastly:

4. OUR RESPONSE

Many today have replaced God with their own image.

Not necessarily something carved from wood of stone.

But they have placed something or someone over or in place of God.

Have you ever heard someone say of the Word of God. "Oh, I can't believe that God is like that!" "My God is a loving God who would never hurt anyone."

If not that exact expression, they may say something similar.

What's wrong with saying?

It is replacing God with one created in our own image!

You see we turn things around and decide who and what our God will be.

That is the very thing that God warned us about.

How can we know if we have created our own image of God?

Note these verses and see if any of them fit our way of thinking about God.

2 Timothy 3:1-5

¹ This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. ² For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, ³ Without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, ⁴ Traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more

than lovers of God; ⁵ Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away.

Romans 1:21-25

²¹ 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. ²² Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, ²³ 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. ²⁴ Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves: ²⁵ 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.

Close:

A little girl ask her dad while at church one day, “Daddy if this is God’s house where is God?”

Her dad responded, “God is like the wind, you can’t see it, but we can see its results in the blow of the leaves, and the movement of the clouds in the sky.”

“God like the wind in a small way moves in the church amongst His people, and like the wind we don’t know where it comes from, but we can see the results .

The truth is we cannot catch the wind and we should never replace God with our graven images.

We are all guilty to some degree of manufacturing little gods for ourselves. We may not have a statue or an image to which we bow down, but we do have habits, traditions, activities, people and possessions that we place ahead of God.

This is idolatry and this is sin.

No one or nothing deserves your worship more than God Himself. Is He receiving it as he should?

Is our God the God of the Bible or something different that we have created in our mind?