

# You Shall Not Make a Carved Image

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[0:00] Oh, by the way, so my daughter Isabella said, Dad, I think it would be great if the kids had something to color while you're giving your message.

! Can I help you with that? Well, of course you can. And so she put together this coloring page, which is, You Shall Make No Idols.

We got somebody bowing down before an idol, and we decided instead of just putting somebody bowing down before an idol, we put an X across it to make sure everybody knows that's what you should not do, by the way.

So, but thank you, Isabella, for making that. Did everybody who wants one of these, and by the way, it doesn't have to just be for the kids. If anybody else, you know, sometimes it helps just to keep your hands busy while you're listening.

So, I saw Joe raise his hand, so I'm going to go ahead and give one of these to Joe. Well, we are in, we're going through the Ten Commandments.

[1:08] And let me get to the book of Exodus here. But we've been, we've had a few introductory messages just looking at the law in general.

We kind of went through the story of the Ten Commandments and how it came to be, and how those Ten Commandments came to be identified. Of all the 613 commandments, those, these ten, are the only ones that God actually spoke out loud from Mount Sinai to his people, the Jews.

The rest were written down by Moses, but these ten were specifically spoken out loud at the very beginning from Mount Sinai. We looked at how Christians should relate to the law of Moses today.

Do we have the same kind of relationship or obligation as the Jews did? We considered that. And then what does it mean for us to not be under law, but under grace, like the Bible verse that we, our memory Bible verse says.

And so, as Christians, just to kind of summarize, we, the law is still good, it's still righteous, it describes righteousness, but we are not under it.

[2:29] So we can still look to it for instruction. Paul himself calls the law instructions in righteousness. But the law no longer has any power over us to condemn us, to separate us from God.

So even when we fail to keep the law, whether it's written down in the Bible, or even the law in our own hearts, our conscience, even when we fail in those areas, we still are part of God's family, he still holds on tightly to us, we are still united with him, we still have eternal life, we are still part of God's family.

And all because we put our faith and trust in Jesus. And that's all there is to it. And aren't we so grateful for that? Last week, we looked at the first commandment.

And we talked about, well, there's actually different groups that actually count these a little bit differently. And so today, we're going to be looking at the second commandment, but it's only the second commandment, you know, if you're kind of generally either a Protestant or a Jew, actually.

The Catholics actually take a different view in general. I'm sure there's kind of, can be debates among Protestants or Jews or Catholics, even within their own groups. But in general, the Catholics will say, actually, this is still part of the first commandment.

[4:00] And as you look at what we read yesterday or last week, you shall have no other gods before me. And then this one is, you shall not make any carved images. Well, those relate, right? Because carved images are putting other gods before the one true God.

And so they do relate, and you can see how you might consider them the same commandment. Some have said, well, the reason the Catholics put this as the, combine it with the first commandment, is because, well, there's some idolatry actually involved in Catholicism, and it's their way to kind of try to hide things, to kind of hide the command, hide that commandment kind of, you know, inside, you know, a larger, larger group of verses.

I don't know if that's fair, because, you know, I think it is, it can be a challenge on how to divide these up. They're not numbered in the Bible by any means. But we will talk about that in this message.

So, why would we even really spend time in talking about this commandment against idolatry? I mean, idolatry is not, worshiping of idols is not something we really even see today, right? And it's certainly not something that Christians need to be concerned about, right? Well, let's see. Let's read this passage. We're going to read both the first commandment and the second commandment, again, depending on how you divide it up.

[5:24] But we'll read Exodus 20, 3 through 6. And here's what it says. You shall have no other gods before me. You shall not make for yourself a carved image, any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water underneath the earth.

You shall not bow down to them, nor serve them. For I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generations of those who hate me, but showing mercy to thousands, to those who love me and keep my commandments. So those are the two commandments. You shall have no other gods, and then you shall not make any carved images. And then it elaborates a bit. I also want to look at Deuteronomy.

Deuteronomy is a repetition of the law of Moses, and it also repeats the Ten Commandments, but also expounds a bit on the Ten Commandments. One of the things we've said about the Ten Commandments is it seems like it's somewhat of a summary of the whole law.

It doesn't give a lot of detail, but as you look through the Ten Commandments, you can kind of see how it would represent the whole law. But in Deuteronomy chapter 4, and go ahead and turn there, because we're going to read a larger passage.

[6:45] Deuteronomy chapter 4. This is Moses speaking to the people. And he says this, Deuteronomy chapter 4, verse 15.

Take careful heed to yourselves, for you saw no form when the Lord spoke to you at Horeb, out of the midst of the fire, lest you act corruptly and make for yourself a carved image in the form of any figure.

The likeness of male or female, the likeness of any animal that is on the earth, or the likeness of any winged bird that flies in the air, the likeness of anything that creeps on the ground, or the likeness of any fish that is in the water beneath the earth.

And take heed, lest you lift your eyes to heaven. And when you see the sun, the moon, and the stars, all the host of heaven, you feel driven to worship them and serve them, which the Lord your God has given to all the peoples under the whole heaven as a heritage.

And so here, we see somewhat of an elaboration on this commandment about idolatry. And he sets this up by saying, hey, here's an important point.

[7:58] When God appeared to you, he didn't actually appear in physical form, right? There was what? There was clouds, smoke, fire on the mountain, lightning, thunder, and even earthquakes, right?

And all of those things pointed to God being there, but they weren't some kind of image or form meant to represent God. It wasn't as if a dragon, right, came out of the black cloud and that represented God or some other kind of beast.

No, God did not reveal himself in any kind of material way to them. But he did speak to them at that time when he told them that they should not worship idols.

So, what is it specifically? Let's talk about some of the things, what we should say that God forbids when it comes to idolatry. The first thing is, he says, do not use idols to worship other gods. specifically, don't make them in the form of creatures. Don't make them in the form of humans, either male or female.

[9:11] Don't make them in the form of animals that are on the earth like cows or oxen or any kind of animal, right? It could be a giraffe or an elephant.

Also, he mentions, don't make them in the form of animals that are in the sky like birds. Don't make an idol out of an eagle. And also, even those things that are below the earth in the oceans, don't make idols out of fish or whales or an octopus or anything.

And by the way, what does that cover? That covers everything, right? Everything above, everything right here and everything below us. There's nothing that God excluded when he says, do not make these graven images or these carved images.

He also says in this particular passage in Deuteronomy that you should also not worship created things, things that you didn't necessarily carve with your own hand, for example, like the sun, the moon, and the stars.

But that would also include, you know, any host of heaven, the planets, or he created things on the ground like rocks. And we've seen this in various cultures.

[10:28] There'll be a big stone or a boulder and they'll worship it. Or trees or mountains. God found it to be so important that we would separate him from his creation.

God created and what he created was good, right? But his creation is not him. He wants us to worship him, not what he created.

We actually have a term for this concept of worshipping the creation. We call it pantheism. It's that God is part of his creation. And that's not what the Bible teaches at all.

The Bible teaches that God is a person he created but he is separate from it. And so we ought not to worship the creation in any way, shape, or form. In Romans, Paul, the apostle, the apostle to the Gentiles, speaks about idolatry.

And he says this in Romans 1, verse 22, professing to be wise, he says, they became fools. He's just talking about idolaters. So you have a God who is immortal, who is incorruptible, who is not subject to decay.

[11:52] And instead of just worshipping him as he is, we have decided that we are going to create images. Images made like corruptible man and the birds and four-footed animals and creeping things.

Therefore, God also gave them up to uncleanness and the lust of their heart to dishonor their bodies among themselves who exchanged the truth of God for the lie and they worshipped and served the creature rather than the creator who was blessed forever.

Amen. And so this is what we as Christians and not just us Christians but everyone is to avoid. We do not worship the creature. We worship the creator, the one who created all things.

So here's another question and this isn't really directly addressed in the Ten Commandments or really anywhere in the law. What about men? Men of renown, kings who have authority, emperors. Is it okay to worship them? I mean, we've seen that quite a bit throughout history. Even today, I think about Kim Jong-un, I think is his name today in North Korea.

[13:02] Him and his father and I think this whole family dynasty are considered as gods. I mean, I don't know how many people actually in North Korea consider them. I'm sure it's more than a few but they at least present themselves right as gods, as deity to be worshipped.

It's not quite as common today as it used to be but even, I've looked at the history of Cambodia and Thailand and the different rulers over those nations have in the recent past been considered as gods.

All throughout the Roman period, the different Roman emperors were given kind of a divine platform.

We actually see this even manifest during the time of the apostles, the time of the early church.

There's a description of an event, this is in Acts chapter 12, of one of the Herods, Herod Agrippa and as he was out before the people, the people started to shout that he is like a god.

This is the voice of a god that we're listening to and well, that made him feel pretty good. He was being honored as a god. Does anybody remember what happened after that?

[14:28] God struck him down. God struck him down because instead of rejecting the worship of the people, he kind of enjoyed it and he received it.

It says specifically because he did not give glory to God. We are to worship the creator, not the creature. God is supernatural beings.

God is supernatural, but there are other beings that are not mortal as we are. They are more supernatural, heavenly, you might call them, angels of all sorts.

We shouldn't worship men. After all, they're mortal and die, but what about these immortal creatures? Should we worship angels? After all, the angels themselves, specifically the good ones anyway, hey, they're on God's side, they're on God's team, so maybe we ought to worship them just like we do, just like we worship God.

You know that Paul specifically speaks to this. In Colossians chapter 2, Paul says this, let no one cheat you of your reward, taking delight in false humility and the worship of angels, intruding into those things which he has not seen.

[15:49] You shouldn't worship angels. In fact, there are several times throughout the Bible where the idea, this concept of worshipping angels is rejected as idolatry.

There's an interesting account in the book of Revelation. John is receiving this revelation and he would have angels come to him. There's several different times where an angel comes to John delivering to him this message about what's going to happen in the future.

There's one described here in Revelation 22 verse 8. It says this, Now I, John, saw and heard these things and when I heard and saw, I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel who showed me these things.

And then he said to me, See that you do not do that. For I am your fellow servant and your brother, and of your brethren, the prophets, and of those who keep the words of this book.

Worship God, he said. Even the angels themselves, the good ones anyway, refuse the worship of men.

[16:57] We worship not the creature and even the angels are creatures, right, created by God. we worship instead the creator and him alone.

Well, that leads to another question. You know, these carved images have been found to be useful to, as a way to, to worship the one true God, the real God, not a false God, but the real one.

And is there anything wrong with that? I mean, we're just using it as a means, as a mechanism to worship the one true God. When we gave the story of the Ten Commandments, if you remember, one of the things that happened was when Moses first went up on the mountain, he received those Ten Commandments on tablets of stone that God wrote, he etched.

It says with the hand of God that those commandments were etched in stone on the tablets. But as he was up there, something happened down at the foot of the mountain.

And there was the people, they erected a golden calf for themselves. And here's what God said to Moses, Exodus chapter 32, verse 7.

[18:18] And the Lord said to Moses, go, get down, for your people, notice how he says your people, not my people, for your people whom you have brought out of the land of Egypt have corrupted themselves.

They have turned aside quickly out of the way which I commanded them. They have made themselves a molded calf and worshipped it and sacrificed to it.

And this is what they said, this is what God said, this is what they said, this is your God, O Israel, that brought you out of the land of Egypt. They created a calf, an idol, to represent Jehovah, the one, the God of Moses, who had brought them out of the land of Egypt.

That's what this golden calf represented. And I'm sure God was thrilled with that, that they're worshipping the one true God, you know, using this golden calf.

Was God thrilled? No, he was devastated. He was angry that they would do such a thing. And by the way, this was after God had spoken from the mountain and told them, do not carve any statues to worship.

[19:33] It doesn't take long sometimes to forget what God tells us, does it? So God had specifically said in these Ten Commandments, I do not want you to create any carved images.

Don't make them of humans, don't make them of animals, don't make them of any kind of created thing. Because this is considered idolatry.

Well, one question comes to mind, does that mean, because it's somewhat ambiguous as we read here in the book of Exodus, does that mean that we are never allowed as Christians or believers of some kind, to create, to carve an animal?

You know, I've actually seen people in this church carve animals out of wood. Even present them here at the church to put on display for people to look at.

Is that wrong? Is that idolatry? I don't think so. I don't think in any way, shape, or form we could consider that idolatry.

[20:44] Really, right, sculpturing is an art form. It's something that we can appreciate. Both carving things out of wood or making them out of clay or other materials.

And then just drawing pictures, right? I mean, this is not just about, by the way, creating idols that you carve, right? An idol can be anything that is made by human hands.

It can be a picture drawn on a canvas. So, is art forbidden to Christians or to believers? No, I don't think so at all. I think this must be understood in the context of worship.

In the context of worshiping a god or gods, whether it's the one true god or false gods. That's what the context of this carving of this forbidding of carving statues.

Did you know that actually in the Bible that there are times where God commissions works of art?

Did you know that? Especially with the temple. God created all of these designs for how the temple or the tabernacle before it and then the temple should be built.

[21:58] Different decorations that were part of the temple. Over the top of the ark itself, where the ten commandments lay in the holiest of holies, was to be built these statues of cherubim, which are like angels.

And they were there kind of hovering over the ark. And Moses was even told to speak to God from between the cherubim. That's where he would speak to them.

Instead, after Mount Sinai, that's where God would speak to Moses. The cherubim were also represented in other places when the temple was built. When Solomon's temple was built, there were wooden cherubim made as decorations.

There were actually cherubim embroidered on the curtains in the tabernacle. The priestly garments had different renderings embroidered on them of pomegranates.

The golden lampstands were decorated with almond flowers. There were even little statues of oxen in the temple. There was a, they called it the big sea, or a big tub to be filled with water for ceremonial washings.

[23:10] And that big tub was supposed to sit on 12 oxen statues. I'm not sure how big this was, but it was 12 oxen to represent the 12 tribes of Israel.

And those were part of the decorations in the temple. Things that God himself commissioned. We find later, too, that there was this incident in the wilderness when the, when Israel was in the wilderness.

And there was an opportunity for them to be healed, right? And God commissioned that Moses would make a serpent, a statue of a serpent, on a, like a rod.

We actually see that today, right? With, is it the red cross? That's the symbol. Medics, yeah. Sorry, red cross, I guess is a cross. But we use that as kind of a symbol of medicine, right?

Today. And that's something that God commissioned Moses to create. And when the people looked to that, right? And by the way, that's a type in the shadow of Jesus on the cross.

[24:22] When, when the people looked to that, they were, they were healed. And so, with all that in mind, I don't think we should in any way, shape, or form think that it's wrong to just carve an image of, of an animal.

An owl, or a giraffe, or an elephant. Whatever it might be. Those things are all acceptable. As long as, right? We're not worshiping them. We're including them in any kind of way, shape, or form in our worship.

What about bowing down? That's something that is mentioned here in this commandment, that you shall not bow down to these idols. And so, is it, is it inherently wrong to bow down to something or maybe some people?

This is actually a common thing across all cultures. As a way to honor or reverence people, usually people in authority, we will bow down.

Now, you know, in this country, usually we don't do that as often, but in many other cultures, it's very common. Is it wrong to do so? Well, let's go to the Bible. What is, what do we see in the Bible?

[25:30] We actually see Abraham two different times bowing down to people. He had three visitors come to him. If you remember that story, they eventually went off to Sodom and the city of Sodom.

He bowed down to them as they came. It was an incident with the Hittites where he bowed down before the leaders as a way to honor and reverence them and their authority. Jacob bowed down to his brother Esau when he met him later on and later in his life.

Joseph's brothers, they bowed down to their brother Joseph when he was a leader in Egypt. David, he bowed down to King Saul, reverencing him as the king.

Moses bows down to his father Jethro. Abigail bows down to David when she meets him. That's before they were married. Bathsheba, it says, bowed down to her son, the king, King Solomon.

Many, many times we see in the scripture people bowing down. And so it seems bowing down in and of itself is not something that is forbidden in the Bible. Paul speaks about the importance of giving honor to people who are owed honor.

[26:37] even if it's not based on their own personal integrity but just based on their position, their authority. He says you need to give honor to whom honor was due.

He was actually talking about corrupt government officials. You should give them honor so it is appropriate. But we also see some examples where bowing down to people was rejected.

We just, my kids just were involved in a play, the story of Esther. And one of the key plot points in the story of Esther is Mordecai, Esther's cousin actually who raised her, refuses to bow before Haman, one of the king's officials.

And so why did he do that? I mean isn't it appropriate for Christians to bow before an official? And it usually is and it usually would be appropriate and fine to do so.

But in this case and if you read commentaries it's not totally clear but it seems that what Haman was doing was not asking people to just reverence his position but to actually worship him as a god.

[27:44] And that is what Mordecai refused to do. Context matters, doesn't it? Also Daniel and his friends, remember Daniel's friends?

Do you remember why they ended up getting thrown into that fiery furnace? It was because the king had set up a statue and commanded everyone in the land to bow down to that statue.

And I can imagine, it doesn't necessarily say, but I can imagine that these men bowed to the king at various points in their service to the king and maybe even other officials as a way to reverence and honor them.

But in this specific case they refused to bow down to a statue to worship it as god. Because that's what was commanded, that was what was requested or required of them.

Not just to reverence and authority but to actually worship this false god. This gets to another question I think is important to consider that some Christians debate about.

[28:48] When it comes to Jesus, now Jesus himself is God made flesh, the Bible tells us. Right? God in a form, in an image that actually looks like us.

So he actually does have an image, unlike God up on the Mount Sinai who did not have an image. God the Son comes to us in bodily form and reveals himself in the form of a man.

And so, what should we do when we want to try to represent Jesus? Or should we do that at all? You go to the Sistine Chapel, right?

And you see all kinds of paintings and decorations representing, sometimes it's the hand of God, right? That famous painting. And then also representations of Jesus.

I think about Leonardo da Vinci, his famous painting of the Last Supper. There's Jesus with his 12 disciples. Is it okay? Is it appropriate to make an image of Jesus?

[29:52] What about today in the modern era where we don't just have paintings but we have films and movies where we can actually illustrate in a very powerful way the life of Jesus?

We have The Chosen, the movie The Chosen that's been, you know, fairly popular and for a lot of people has been an amazing way to experience Jesus' ministry.

Is it inherently wrong though to represent Jesus in some kind of way? Is that idolatry to create an image, some piece of art that represents Jesus?

And I don't think so. I don't really see any reason why that would be forbidden. Because remember this is all the context that matters. Now if we have a piece of art and we are bowing down before it, praying to it, worshipping in some way, then that of course is forbidden.

But just representing Jesus in a way to try to make him known to others, I don't think we should forbid that in any kind of way.

[31:00] Yet, at the same time, I think there is a risk involved there. It's not forbidden, but we ought to be careful and we'll talk about that in a moment.

I think there are, I'd like to talk about three types of idolatry. I think if, not adultery, but idolatry.

Three types of idolatry that we should consider when thinking about this concept of idols.

The first is pagan idolatry. What is primarily in view, what we've mostly been talking about to this point. The second, I would call it secular idolatry. Those who don't necessarily have gods in mind, but still I think idolatry is at play.

And then the third, I'm going to label it Christian idolatry. What does that mean? Let's start with pagan idolatry. And this is the worship of false gods. Where you are worshiping an idol in order to honor or reverence in some kind of way.

Some other being other than the one true God. And one of the reasons why I think there are so many idols in the world is because in many, and I think most cases of idolatry, today and throughout the history of the world, is because there are real spiritual beings behind those idols.

[32:22] They're not just some figment of somebody's imagination that they came up with. In Deuteronomy chapter 32, verse 17, it says this, speaking of idols and idolaters, those who worship false gods and the idols.

It says, They sacrificed to demons, not to God. To gods they did not know, to new gods, new arrivals that your fathers did not fear. They were worshiping idols made out of wood and clay.

But what does Moses say here? What does the Lord say? He said, these people are worshiping spirits, demons. Even Paul himself in 1 Corinthians chapter 10, says this, and speaking about, one of the things that Christians had to kind of deal with when they came out of idolatry was, well, how do we like eat, you know, because there's a lot of people, like most of the food that you find out in the marketplace, it's like sacrifice to idols, all of it.

Basically wasn't anything that you were going to buy at the market that wasn't sacrificed to an idol. So as a Christian, is it okay for me to do that, or should I like just not eat anything in the marketplace? That was a big question.

In answering that question, Paul makes an observation. He says this, 1 Corinthians 10, 18. Observe Israel after the flesh. Are not those who eat of the sacrifices partakers of the altar? Those who, the Levites, the priests who would eat of the altar, they would eat the sacrifices that were made on the altar, they would eat of, they would partake of it.

[34:00] And so they are partakers of the altar. What am I saying then? That an idol is anything, or what is offered to an idol anything? He said, am I saying that idols are like real, like something that kind of has any kind of sway over us in a physical sense?

He says, no. He says, rather that the thing which the Gentiles sacrifice, sorry, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to demons, is what he says.

And not to God. And I do not want you to have fellowship with demons. You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons. You cannot partake of the Lord's table and of the table of demons. Or do you provoke the Lord to jealousy? Say, hey, when these people are sacrificing to these wooden idols that are static, what they're really doing, those idols are just a proxy.

They're just a stand-in. Because what they're worshiping is a real person, a real supernatural being behind it. And they're trying to appease that being who promises either threats of destruction or maybe blessings.

[35:08] If all you do is just adore me and honor me instead of God the creator. And I don't think it should stop there.

You know, Paul ultimately says, hey, when you're in the marketplace, just don't ask like where it came from. If you find out, if they tell you it was offered to an idol, then I would recommend you avoid it.

But if you just don't ask, you know, people won't think that you're engaging in the idolatry with them. So that was kind of his instruction.

But you know, there are ways that people today even fraternize, give respect and honor and credence to demons.

Now, they're not necessarily worshiping them. So maybe that's okay. As long as we don't worship the demons, maybe we can just ask them for favors. Is that okay?

[36:12] We could use a Ouija board, right, and have the spirits just help guide us. Maybe a decision that we need to make. Or automatic handwriting. Or we can use tarot cards.

Or chicken entrails. Or something. And these spirits that have some kind of knowledge and power, they can just help us along the way. All of this is idolatry.

Even more seemingly innocent things. I have a little rabbit's foot. I like to just rub every once in a while. Or some crystals. I can maybe hang around my neck and it will give me good luck or some kind of blessing.

I mean, anything that just brings peace or blessing or luck to my life. I mean, there's nothing wrong with that, is there? All of it is idolatry.

You know what? If we need help and we cannot get it from our neighbor, from our family, what does the Bible say where we should find help? Psalm 121.

[37:21] I will lift up my eyes to the hills from whence comes my help. My help comes from the Lord who made heaven and earth. If we need help in our life, we don't need to be looking to spirits.

We need to look to the one spirit, the one who created all things, God himself. Now, I have a story. I remember years ago, I don't remember how old I was. I remember exactly where I lived and I can actually picture it in my mind.

You know, kids get kind of enamored with things in the culture and back when I was a young kid, what was really popular, especially for boys, was Rambo. I don't know if anybody else can identify with that.

Now, my parents didn't let me watch the movies because they were good parents. But Rambo was a part of, you know, the cultural language, right?

Everybody knew who Rambo was and you had some cool things. He would have a cool knife, right? And the bow and arrow thing, right? And they also had like this, what do you call it, a headscarf or something like that that he would tie on his head.

[38:25] And all of the boys, of course, thought that was the coolest thing. And so I got, I can't remember how I got it, if I bought it or somebody got it for me, like a little Rambo kit, right? So that I could dress up to be like Rambo.

One of the things that came with that kit, it had a little knife, I can't remember all the things, the headscarf, was a necklace. And this was something, I guess, that he wore in the movies, a little necklace.

And on that necklace, it was a little like a pendant or an amulet in the form of a Buddha, a Buddha. And so, I don't remember how everything played out, but I remember this.

My dad took that little amulet and he says, come with me, we're going to go over to the garage. And he pulled out one of those butane blow torches, or those torches, and he says, this is a false god, a false idol, and we are going to destroy this thing.

And my eyes got super big and I watched him burn that thing into nothing. I remember so vividly that happening.

[39:33] I remember, I can picture as if it was yesterday that happening. He taught me an important lesson. Stay away from false gods and from idols. The next one I want to look at is what I call secular idolatry.

And this is where, even though we don't have a god in mind, and this is pretty common today, especially in the West, where, you know, we don't believe in gods or a god or anything of that. We have more of a naturalist, materialist view of things.

We believe in science. Right? But, pretend, these secularists can, and even Christians sometimes, can worship things that they ought not to.

In Philippians, Paul says this, Philippians chapter 3, verse 18, For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and I'll tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ, whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly.

They worship their belly, their appetites, their lusts. Oh, isn't that true for many people? Power, sex, food, comfort, all of these things can be a god to people.

[40:42] It is the thing that they live for, the thing that they, they point all of their devotion to. Jesus warned about money. He says this, Matthew 6, 24, No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other.

You cannot serve God and mammon. Does that mean money is evil? No. Money can be a service to us, but when money becomes our master, when we put it at the same level as God, it becomes to us an idol.

And boy, are men good at creating idols out of anything. John Calvin wrote in his famous book, The Institutes of the Christian Religion, he says this, The human mind is, so to speak, a perpetual factory of idols.

Our imaginations can make of anything an idol. The last form of idolatry I want to look at is what I'll call Christian idolatries. How in the world can Christians be involved in idolatry?

And, I mean, is this even a concern? Well, John, the apostle, thought so when he wrote in his first letter, 1 John, the very end. Here's how he ends it. He says, this is the very last sentence of his whole letter, Little children, keep yourself from idols.

[42:05] That was the last thing that he said. Avoid idols, stay away from, because it was a concern, even for these believers, that they would somehow get themselves involved in idolatry.

Alright, we're coming around, coming to the end here. I want to talk about this whole thing with the Catholic idolatry. There's lots of accusations made that Catholicism promotes idolatry.

During the Reformation, which was kind of a split away from the Catholic Church, there was actually revolts, like, there would be, like, riots in the street where people would tear down all of these statues that were put up by Rome.

Now, I don't come from a Catholic background, so these things are not as familiar to me, but from what I understand, it's very common in Catholic practice to bow or kneel towards statues, whether it's Jesus or Mary or other people, or sometimes just objects, like, whether it's crosses or things like that.

A kissing of those statues and then praying before them. Now, when I look this up on the internet, I looked this up on YouTube and looked up, you know, Catholic idolatry, 95% of all the results were from Catholic people saying why what they do is not idolatry.

[43:28] And so there's quite a bit of a marketing campaign to refute this idea, but here's some of the things that I heard or saw. The claims are, they say, well, we're not worshipping anything, but we are venerating.

We are venerating them. So not worship, but venerate. If you look up in the dictionary, it's basically exactly the same thing. Worship and venerate. And like I said, honoring someone is appropriate and fine.

But why are we honoring a statue? Well, here's some of the other claims. Say these images or statues are ways to physically connect with God, right?

It's a tangible way to connect with God. You know, we can't see him, he's invisible, but we have this statue here that represents him and that's a way for us to kind of interact with God or with the saints.

They say that they're aides, aides in our worship and that Catholics don't, you know, don't say that they're gods by any means and that I'm sure is very true but that they are just aides to help us worship the one true God.

[44:36] And I'll say this, that even if all that is true and you know, I take people at their word, I imagine all of it is for the most part, but it is still wrong and inappropriate to do so because this is what God commanded.

He does not want us to worship even him with these aids, with things that we have built with our own hands. even if we prefer it, even if we prefer tangible things.

We don't get to decide how we worship God. God's the one who tells us how we ought to worship. But you know what, even as Protestants, can Protestants, those who are not Catholic, can we be involved in idolatry?

I think we have to be careful. You know, churches will have paintings of Jesus, stained glass with an image of Jesus. We even have like crosses like this or sometimes we'll have a big Bible out front or something like that for people to see.

And while those things, like I said earlier, are not wrong in and of themselves, they can certainly lead to a tendency to venerate, to honor, or to focus our worship with those things in front of us.

[45:57] And that not ought to be so. In this church, if you want to pray, do not come up here and pray in front of this cross. That's not going to provide you any benefit. Right? You pray to God directly.

We don't kneel before things. We don't kiss them. And remember when I said that God, remember God commissioned that serpent in the wilderness? Well, I don't know if you know this, but that serpent comes up again hundreds of years later after Moses created it.

In 2 Kings 18, it tells a story about a new king that came into power. His name was Hezekiah. And he was, he wanted to make sure, he tore down all the idols that the people had set up.

He was one of the good kings. And you know, one of the idols that he found, here it is, 1 Kings, or 2 Kings 18, 4. He removed the high places and broke the sacred pillars, cut down the wooden image, and broke in pieces the bronze serpent that Moses had made.

For until those days, the children of Israel burned incense to it and called it Nehushtan. They took something that God commissioned and they turned it into an idol that they would use for their worship.

[47:08] And Hezekiah broke it into pieces. This is idolatry. We do not do this. This is not how we worship God and it's not how, you know, we should worship anything.

Why does God, why not, what's wrong with having a little proxy, a little stand-in to help us connect with God? After all, we're tangible people. We like to, you know, God created us really, right, to interact tangibly, to relate to one another in tangible ways.

We're made to touch and to hold and to look and to hear and to smell and to taste the whole world around us and relate to people in that way. Yet God, He's invisible. He's unseen. At least, for now. You know, I think, one of the things I think that God really values is He wants us to yearn for Him. You know, there is one day when we will stand before God, Jesus specifically, God the Son, in a tangible way.

We'll be able to bow before Him. We'll be able to touch Him. We'll be able to hold Him. We'll be able to kiss Him. Not a statue, but a real person.

[48:22] But not yet. And so, now we can yearn for Him. But, even that being the case, right? You remember, in this age in which we live, you know, the Jews, they had to go to the temple to worship God.

Today, where do we have to go to worship? Is it a church building? No. Today, remember that curtain was torn in two when Jesus died on the cross?

And then on the day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit came down on those in the upper room. And from that day forward, God has lived Himself.

Not in a temple, but in us, in the believers, in those who put their faith and trust in Him. The other thing, and I'll, I'll try, I'll try to finish this up here quickly, but I remember a few years ago, I was posting on Facebook, and have you ever been embarrassed when you posted something that ended up not being true?

So I said, you know, a lot of people call like, you know, watching too much football, idolatry, things like that. And I said, that's not idolatry. Idolatry is when you carve an image, you know, and bow down before it.

[49:31] That is like what idolatry is. And then somebody posted a verse. This is what they posted, Colossians 3, 5. Therefore, put to death your members which are on the earth, fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry.

And I kind of had to put my foot in my mouth, recro, or whatever. Because really, anything that you put before God, right, is idolatry.

And man, we can do that with all kinds of things, can't we? Even as Christians. I'm going to wrap this up and just, kind of with the theme that we've been talking about.

you know, I will finish up with the last part because it speaks to the seriousness of idolatry.

This is what it says back in Exodus in the Ten Commandments. For I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generation to those who hate me, but showing mercy to thousands to those who love me and keep my commandments.

[50:34] I mean, this is, he's saying, hey, judgment is coming if you do this. But mercy and grace for those who keep my commandments. Now, one thing, why is God visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children?

Well, I think that's just talking about the consequences of their sin coming on the children. God is actually very clear. You read Ezekiel 18 that God does not hold children accountable for the sins of their parents.

But we do know, we see it all the time, that children do suffer from the sins of their parents, don't they? The consequences. But then, he speaks to mercy.

And it says to thousands, in other places, it talks about thousand generations. And that's the mercy that we found, haven't we? In Christ. Delivered through the cross of Jesus Christ.

We're part of that, that generation that has found mercy through Christ. That delivers us from the condemnation of the law, from the judgment that we deserve. Even when we fail to keep God's commandments.

[51:42] Because we do fail, unfortunately. Even when we fall into all these varieties of adultery that we've talked about. His love and his grace keeps us.

Because we hold on to Jesus. Because we trust in what he accomplished for us. And then finally, the theme that I want throughout this whole thing, this whole series on the Ten Commandments, is that even though we are fastidious, we're so careful to keep these laws, to avoid any idols, to avoid putting up statues and bowing before them or kissing them or whatever it might be.

We avoid all these things. But if we do all that, we don't grow in our love for the Lord. We failed.

Because what God wants from us is not just to avoid the bad.

He wants us to run to what is good. And God created us to have a relationship with him. where we grow in our love for him.

It reflects his love for us. God demonstrated his love for us through the cross. That's what the Bible says. And while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. And we should respond to that love with a love of our own as the law itself says that we would love the Lord our God with all of our hearts, with all of our souls, with all of our minds, and with all of our strength, with everything that's in us.

[53:11] And there is no law that constrains that love. We can love God a little bit or we can love him greatly. And may we learn to love him more and more each and every day.

Let's finish with a word of prayer. Father, work in us. There are so many things that your word, even in the law, teaches us. Instructions on how to avoid the foolishness of idolatry.

But even beyond all these things, Father, Paul says in the Romans, he says that love, love fulfills the law. Let us pursue love.

Show us how to love you more. That this whole idolatry thing would never even kind of cross our minds because we are growing more and more in love with you each and every day. Help us to love you more.

We thank you for that. In Jesus' name. Amen. All right. Thanks, everybody.