

Walking with Jesus Through Sinai:  
 Seeking Moral Clarity in an Age of Chaos with the 10 Commandments  
 CPC Adult Sunday Studies Fall 2024  
 6 - First Commandment, part 3

### **Atheism and Idolatry in All its Forms**

**From the Preface and 1st Commandment** - *I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. You shall have no other gods before me.* - we focus now on all the ways we break it

WLC Q. 105. What are the **sins forbidden** in the first commandment?

A. The sins forbidden in the first commandment, are atheism, in denying or not having a God; idolatry, in having or worshiping more gods than one, or any with or instead of the true God; the not having and avouching him for God, and our God; the omission or neglect of anything due to him, required in this commandment; ignorance, forgetfulness, misapprehensions, false opinions, unworthy and wicked thoughts of him; bold and curious searching into his secrets; all profaneness, hatred of God; self-love, self-seeking, and all other inordinate and immoderate setting of our mind, will, or affections upon other things, and taking them off from him in whole or in part; vain credulity, unbelief, heresy, misbelief, distrust, despair, incorrigibleness, and insensibleness under judgments, hardness of heart, pride, presumption, carnal security, tempting of God; using unlawful means, and trusting in lawful means; carnal delights and joys; corrupt, blind, and indiscreet zeal; lukewarmness, and deadness in the things of God; estranging ourselves, and apostatizing from God; praying, or giving any religious worship, to saints, angels, or any other creatures; all compacts and consulting with the devil, and hearkening to his suggestions; making men the lords of our faith and conscience; slighting and despising God and his commands; resisting and grieving of his Spirit, discontent and impatience at his dispensations, charging him foolishly for the evils he inflicts on us; and ascribing the praise of any good we either are, have, or can do, to fortune, idols, ourselves, or any other creature."

Before we look at this in detail, it's important that we see the gravity of what's at stake, that we grow not just in our knowledge of our sin but also in our hatred of it. Living in the grace of the gospel means we can face our sin in all its stench, growing in our appreciation of the depths of God's mercy as well as the horrifying depths he had to go to save us from our sin.

Read **Jeremiah 2.1-32** for one example of God's hatred at idolatrous sin.

1. **Theoretical Atheism** - "atheism, in denying or not having a God;"
2. **Virtual Atheism** - "idolatry, in having or worshiping more gods than one, or any with or instead of the true God;"
3. **Practical Atheism** - "the not having and avouching him for God, and our God; the *omission or neglect* of anything due to him, required in this commandment;"
  1. "ignorance, forgetfulness, misapprehensions, false opinions, unworthy and wicked thoughts of him;"
  2. "bold and curious searching into his secrets;"
    1. There's a pride here that is not trusting God for who he is and what he has chosen to reveal to us, a kind of "prying" that is not humble.
  3. "all profaneness, hatred of God;"
    1. From Vos' Commentary on WLC - "Profanity is a sin of speech, profaneness is a sin of character, a sin of the whole life."
    2. Considering sin as a hatred of God, how does that change our perspective?
4. "self-love, self-seeking, and all other *inordinate* and *immoderate* setting of our mind, will, or affections upon other things, and taking them off from him in whole or in part; . . . and ascribing the praise of any good we either are, have, or can do, to fortune, idols, ourselves, or any other creature."
  1. Remember what God is **due** - total trust and devotion and affection, so if we put any of those things inappropriately (inordinately and immoderately) on anything else, we are guilty of idolatry

5. "vain credulity, unbelief, heresy, misbelief, distrust, despair, incorrigibleness, and insensibleness under judgments, hardness of heart, pride, presumption, carnal security, tempting of God;"
  1. Notice otherwise diverse aspects that have a common link - vain credulity, despair, pride and hardness of heart. What links them all?
  2. Vos - "In essence **pride** amounts to a declaration of independence from God: it rests upon the assumption that we can do something, or be something, or accomplish something good and worthwhile, of ourselves, apart from God and his foreordination and gifts of nature and grace. Therefore pride is based on a lie."
    1. "**Carnal security** is an easygoing confidence that everything is going to be all right, when we have no legitimate grounds for such confidence. It is carnal security that leads people to say "peace, peace" when there is no peace."(270)
  3. What are examples of us doing these?
  4. We can use "faith" in a way that covers over our need to face our dependence upon God by saying "everything will be fine" and ignoring the real sin and suffering and emotional turmoil, which require real faith to face. I don't need faith in a real God if there's nothing I'm really afraid of. "Have no fear" is a comfort that comes to believers in Scripture only after they've admitted or faced their real fear.
  
6. "carnal delights and joys; corrupt, blind, and indiscreet zeal; lukewarmness, and deadness in the things of God"
  1. Notice again an unusual linking of joys, zeal and lukewarmness. What do they have in common?
  2. Early in our relationship with God, we may experience these two extremes - like a honeymoon that then comes crashing back to reality. Why must God bring us through this?
  
7. "making men the lords of our faith and conscience;"
  1. The Church only binds conscience insofar as we can declare "thus says the Lord."

8. “resisting and grieving of his Spirit, discontent and impatience at his dispensations, charging him foolishly for the evils he inflicts on us;”
  1. Why is our impatience ultimately an unwillingness to worship God as God?

**The Primacy of the First Commandment.** Remember Luther’s words - “All those who do not at all times trust in His favor, grace and good-will, but seek His favor in other things or in themselves, do not keep this [First] Commandment, and practice real idolatry, even if they were to do the works of all the other Commands.”

- Another reverse implication is if we do any of the above sins of idolatry or atheism, it will lead us to breaking some / all of the other commands that follow.