

# **How the True God Is to Be Worshipped**

## **The Second Commandment**

### **Ephesians 3:14-19**

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For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man; That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fullness of God. Ephesians 3:14-19

The Second Commandment reads:

Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: 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; and showing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments.

The Heidelberg Catechism reads:

Q96: What does God require in the second Commandment?

A96: That we in no way make any image of God, nor worship Him in any other way than He has commanded us in His Word.

Q97: May we not make any image at all?

A97: God may not and cannot be imaged in any way; as for creatures, though they may indeed be imaged, yet God forbids the making or keeping of any likeness of them, either to worship them or to serve God by them.

Q98: But may not pictures be tolerated in churches as books for the people?

A98: No, for we should not be wiser than God, who will not have His people taught by dumb idols, but by the lively preaching of His Word.

This is the first part of two sermons on the Second Commandment. This sermon will focus on the essential core of spiritual worship; next week we will try to look at some of

the things that infringe on spiritual worship. There are two passages that we need to look at before we look at our text from Ephesians 3.

John 4:24: "God is a spirit, and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth."

The Samaritan woman tried to involve Jesus in a discussion concerning which was the right temple of God, the one in Jerusalem, or the one in Samaria. Jesus said that the Jews were right, but that the point would be moot, because true worship is in spirit and in truth, and the day would come when true worshippers would use neither of these temples. The true temple of God is in the hearts of His people, and this can take place anywhere.

Romans 12:1,2: "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service."

"Reasonable" means "of the soul" or "spiritual." There are great implications for this verse which we will expand later, but it is sufficient to say that our service to God must arise from the soul and spirit—it is in the inner man where man encounters God, and God is always present there. Even the things done in the body are to be done in consideration of this great truth: "God is a spirit, and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth." True worship is spiritual worship.

This is the essential meaning of the Second Commandment: God cannot be imaged, and our worship must be of the true God who is a Spirit, and cannot be represented by any carnal or earthly or created thing.

But let us look at the passage in Ephesians, which is Paul's prayer for the church, and it is a prayer that goes to the very heart of the true worship of God. He is praying that their worship would be truly in spirit and in truth.

Ephesians 3:14-19

Vs. 14,15: "For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named," (Eph 3:14-15)

1. The true God is the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and He is the source of every concept of fatherhood that exists everywhere in the world. To attack fatherhood is to attack God himself.
2. There is no innocent feminism, and any role for women or men that is not defined in terms of the God as the creator and source of fatherhood is bound to fail, for it is under the judgment of God. Women cannot rebel against male authority without rebelling against God himself. They can seek redress for male abuse and corruption of power, but they cannot strike out against male authority for involves attack on the name of God himself.

3. God is the Father of our Lord Jesus. He is the First Person of the Holy Trinity and never had to learn what it means to be a Father for He is the Father of Eternity. The very concept of family in the whole world derives from the very essence of God.
4. This is God in Trinity, and every blessing to the world comes from Him, the only true and living God.

Vs. 16: “That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man;” (Eph 3:16)

1. "According" not "out of." When God bestows His treasures, He is not made poorer. His store of grace is not depleted, no matter how much He gives.
2. This passage shows that this strengthening is by grace, for it is granted by God, and is not the result of man’s obedience. It means to “bestow a gift.”
3. “Strengthened with might in the inner man.” You will either be strengthened in the inner man to sin; or you will be strengthened with might in the inner man by grace.
  - a. The first strengthening is to sin, and that comes by the law, for “the strength of sin is the law,” Paul tells us. The natural man is strengthened in sin and rebellion.
  - b. “Spirit” here stands for the Gospel in the same way it stands for the Gospel in Galatians 3:1,2. It is by the hearing of faith the Spirit strengthens the inner man to true righteousness and holiness.
  - c. How are men energized to obedience? the answer is here: by the Holy Spirit. It is by the Spirit and only by the Spirit.

Vs. 17. “That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love,” (Eph 3:17 AV)

1. This connects the Holy Spirit to Christ. Where the Holy Spirit is, there is Christ.
2. Where Christ is, there is the Holy Spirit. The two, along with the Father, can never be separated from each other. When the grace of the Holy Spirit is granted through the Gospel, the result is an implanting of Christ in the heart—not according to essence, of course, for we are always human, but after his image and likeness.
3. This is why the Spirit is called the “Spirit of adoption,” because we are strengthened to cry “Father,” for we know we are sons of God by faith in Jesus Christ.
4. This means we are “rooted” and “grounded.” The roots go down to support us and sustain us. The rooting and grounding is in love, not in terror or fear. No man can worship God in spirit and in truth if he comes as a slave, afraid of punishment.
5. We come in love and thankfulness because of the Gospel. Christ has purchased us with His blood. Not fear, but rather love, because we have been accepted of God through Jesus Christ. We have not received a spirit of fear, but of love, power, and a sound mind.

6. We do not cringe before the altar, but “we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, *even* as by the Spirit of the Lord.”
7. This is true worship. This is the reason we are commanded to pray “Our Father...” for our prayers are the prayers of His children. So the HC says:

Q120: Why did Christ command us to address God thus: Our Father?

A120: To awaken in us at the very beginning of our prayer that childlike reverence for and trust in God, which are to be the ground of our prayer, namely, that God has become our Father through Christ, and will much less deny us what we ask of Him in faith than our parents refuse us earthly things.

Q121: Why is it added: Who art in heaven?

A121: That we might have no earthly thought of the heavenly majesty of God, and from His almighty power expect all things necessary for body and soul.

Vs. 18, 19. “<sup>18</sup> May be able to comprehend with all saints what *is* the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; <sup>19</sup> And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God.” (Eph 3:18-19)

1. We do not try to define breadth, and length, and depth, and height. God has more grace and treasures of wisdom and knowledge than you and I can imagine.
2. But we will only know it if we are taught by the love of Christ, which surpasses knowledge. This is the order then: Through the gospel the Holy Spirit is granted so that I might be conformed to the image of Jesus Christ. Love springs up in my heart through the gospel and I begin to see things clearly.
3. Filled with the fullness of God: not that we become incarnations as Christ was, but that we are filled with the gifts and grace of God. As we read in John 14:

15. If ye love me, keep my commandments.

16. And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever;

17. *Even* the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.

18. I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you.

19. Yet a little while, and the world seeth me no more; but ye see me: because I live, ye shall live also.

20. At that day ye shall know that I *am* in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you.

21. He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him,

and will manifest myself to him.

22. Judas saith unto him, not Iscariot, Lord, how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself unto us, and not unto the world?

23. Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.

24. He that loveth me not keepeth not my sayings: and the word which ye hear is not mine, but the Father's which sent me.

This is true worship. Without this, all other ceremonies, or lack of ceremonies, temples or lack of temples, riches or lack of riches—nothing else avails.

May God bless you. We will look at specific things next week that war against the spiritual worship of God.