

Isaiah 40; Lord's Day 35
FAITH IN GOD AS HE REVEALS HIMSELF

- I. The basis.
 - A. This commandment teaches us about God's being and His relationship.
 - 1. He is a Spirit (John 4:24) without tangible, visible form (John 1:18; Col.1:15), and thus we cannot make images of Him.
 - 2. He is infinite in His being and His glory, with nothing equal to Him (Isa. 40:12-17) and every image limits Him (25,27,28).
 - 3. His relationship with His people (covenant friend) makes images unnecessary.
 - B. God requires that He be worshiped, loved, and thanked accurately, i.e., as He has revealed Himself.
 - 1. Natural man is able only to know about (not "know") God; they cannot understand the things of God (I Cor. 2:14; Rom. 1).
 - 2. God further reveals Himself in His Word and in the preaching of His Word (I Cor. 1:21).
 - C. This command prohibits the use of anything to represent God because they conflict with His revelation of Himself.
 - 1. Any image or representation of a creature is material, external and limited (calves of Aaron and Jeroboam).
 - 2. Image worship is an effort of man to form his own concept of God, which is always less than what He is.
- II. The implication.
 - A. This commandment establishes the "regulative principle" of worship, i.e., God tells us how He is to be worshiped, so the manner of worship is regulated by God's Word (q. 96; Westminster Shorter, q.50) (Deut. 4:2; 12:31,32).
 - 1. We include in worship only what God commands, so He determines how man will serve Him.
 - 2. The Reformed tradition is that God alone may determine how we will serve Him – all else is self-willed service.
 - B. Only those elements prescribed by Scripture are permitted: preaching, sacraments, prayer, offerings, singing.
 - 1. The lively preaching of His revelation (I Cor. 1:21) is God's way of instructing and correcting our mental images.
 - 2. The singing of versifications of the Psalms is because it is the inspired songbook of the church given by the Spirit.
 - C. The characteristics of public worship are: spirituality, simplicity, solemnity, orderliness, and stability.
- III. The commandment gives powerful motivations and encouragements to obey Him.
 - A. First, God pursues with anger and jealousy those who hate Him by not worshiping Him as He commands.
 - B. Second, God makes clear that the violation of this command bears fruit on our children.
 - C. Obedience is encouraged when God promises to show His mercy on those who serve Him as He commands.
 - D. Resulting admonitions.
 - 1. May the solemn formality of our worship services be a reflection of our love for our God.

2. May our relationship to God be sincere (love), and not mere formality.