

FAMILY WORSHIP HELPS

WEEK 46

THIS WEEK'S FOCUS

QUESTION 48: *What are we specially taught by these words "before me" in the first commandment?*

ANSWER: These words "before me" in the first commandment teach us, that God, who seeth all things, taketh notice of, and is much displeased with, the sin of having any other God.



MONDAY



Praise: Sing Psalm 94A

Scripture: Read Hebrews 4:12-13; Psalm 53:1-6

Key Thought: *God sees all things.*

Questions:

- ☞ What does it mean to do something "before God"?
- ☞ Can you hide your actions from other people?
- ☞ Can you hide your actions from God?
- ☞ Is there anything you do that is not done "before God"?
- ☞ What are some ways that we try to hide our false gods from the Lord?

Prayer

Notes: This question from the *Shorter Catechism* is intended to further emphasize the importance of the 1st commandment as well as to clarify the intended meaning of the words "before me" in the commandment itself. The meaning the average English reader commonly attaches to these words is one of priority (i.e. "You shall have no other gods besides Me, or above Me.") The fact is that the word used here in the original Hebrew has quite a different meaning. While it is certainly true that we are to have no other gods besides the true God or honor any above Him, if this were the intended meaning of the words "before me" in the 1st commandment, God would have used the Hebrew word אֵל (pronounced "Al") which carries that meaning. As it happens, He chose the word פָּנִים (pronounced "paw-neem"), which has to do with one's position in relation to another. For example, this word is used in Genesis 6:11 which says, "The earth also was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence." A more literal translation would be "before the face of." The 1st commandment then, when it says "You shall have no other gods," clearly prohibits placing anyone or anything above or beside the true God in our esteem or devotion. When it says "before Me," however, the focus is upon the fact that the one true God sees all the activities of His creatures. We are therefore reminded that the reason we are to have

no other gods is because we His creatures are always before Him and will be held accountable by our Creator.

 TUESDAY

Praise: Sing Psalm 94A

Scripture: Read Acts 5:1-10; Daniel 2:20-22; Psalm 44:20-21

Key Thought: *God takes notice of idolatry in the heart.*

Questions:

- ☞ What did Ananias and Sapphira decide to do? Why?
- ☞ Did anyone know about their plan?
- ☞ How did Peter find out about this?
- ☞ What god did Ananias and Sapphira serve?
- ☞ How does this story illustrate the meaning of the words “before me” in the 1st commandment?
- ☞ How should you respond to these things?

Prayer

Notes: The words “before me” in the 1st commandment remind us that God sees our actions, but even more importantly they teach us that God sees the inner thoughts of our hearts. It would be foolish to imagine that God meant to say, “You may have other gods, just don’t do it in front of Me!” The point is that *everything* is in front of Him! Not only our outward deeds, but also our inward thoughts are known to Him. This is strikingly illustrated by the story of Ananias and Sapphira in Acts 5. Although their scheme to lie to the church in order to appear to be more generous than they actually were was kept secret, God knew their hearts and He revealed their plan to Peter. They had broken the 1st commandment in their hearts and the living God, before whom they stood, called them to account for their secret sin. When we read about Ananias and Sapphira, we should have the same reaction that the rest of the church had in their day: “And great fear came upon all the church, and upon as many as heard these things” (v. 11). Their example should remind us that God sees every wicked intention of our hearts and will hold us accountable for them. When we cling to an idol and serve our own desires instead of God we must remember that He sees our hearts as well as our actions.

 WEDNESDAY

Praise: Sing Psalm 94A

Scripture: Read Deuteronomy 29:24-28; Jeremiah 2:26-29

Key Thought: *God is much displeased with the sin of idolatry.*

Questions:

- ☞ For what sin did God say He would expel Israel from their land?

- ☞ Why is God's anger so great against this particular sin?
- ☞ How is this sin described in Jeremiah 2:27?
- ☞ What particular idols tend to make you turn your back to God instead of your face?

Prayer

Notes: It is a profound understatement to say that “God is much displeased” when His creatures turn to other gods. Words will inevitably fall short of describing the indignation of an infinite, holy God to the disrespect and callous rebellion of men. In Deuteronomy 29 the Lord warned Israel that they would face the “heat of His great anger” if they turned aside to other gods. In Jeremiah 2, this sin is shown to be the highest insult to the glory and honor of the one true God, whose creatures are depicted turning their backs upon His majesty. The words “before Me” in the 1st commandment, by reminding us of God's omnipresence, emphasize what a deplorable wickedness it is for created beings to spurn their Maker to His face by worshiping and serving false gods. What is worse, these insulters of God are only too quick to call upon Him when they find themselves in trouble, though they could not be bothered to serve Him in times of prosperity. Thus we are reminded of the gravity of breaking this commandment, which is nothing less than despising the One upon whom our very existence and eternal fate depends, and who is worthy of nothing but the highest devotion, praise and glory.



THURSDAY



Praise: Sing Psalm 94A

Scripture: Read 1 Chronicles 28:1-9

Key Thought: *This knowledge should deter us from every sin.*

Questions:

- ☞ Would most criminals attempt a crime if they knew they would be caught and punished?
- ☞ If Jesus stood by your side every moment of every day, would your behavior and habits change? Why?
- ☞ Is there ever a moment in the day that we are not in the presence of God?
- ☞ Why should this knowledge deter us from every sin?

Prayer

Notes: One of the applications of the proper understanding of the words “before Me” in the 1st commandment is that our knowledge of God's constant presence should be a deterrent against the pursuit of sin. One of the ways that this should deter sin is through the fear of punishment. Most criminals attempt crimes because they believe they can get away with it. It would be foolish to pursue a crime if you knew that you would be caught and punished. Likewise, it is foolish to continue in sin knowing full well that God sees every transgression, whether in

thought, word, or deed, and will punish every act of wickedness eternally. Most people would tend to say that if Jesus Christ were their constant companion throughout each day, their words, activities, and habits would change. They would be far more careful about what they said and did in order to avoid giving offense to Him. Yet Christ *is* present with us every moment of every day, and we are called to walk in the consciousness of His presence.



FRIDAY



Praise: Sing Psalm 94A

Scripture: Read 1 Peter 1:13-21

Key Thought: *This knowledge should animate us to every duty.*

Questions:

- ☞ Should we be motivated to obey God only because of fear of punishment? What else should motivate us?
- ☞ If you really love, honor, and admire someone, how do you act when you are in their presence?
- ☞ What is it about the nature and works of God that should make us want to walk before Him in a way that pleases Him?
- ☞ Can any other god redeem you?

Prayer

Notes: The knowledge of God's constant presence should not only deter us from every sin, but also animate us to every duty. Fear of punishment is a strong motivation, but it should not be the only motivation of the believer. A true follower of God is motivated even more by His love and admiration for Christ, which moves him to walk in a manner that pleases his Lord. Peter highlights several aspects of the nature and works of God which should animate His people to walk faithfully before Him. Included among these are His holiness, power, and grace, especially as they are revealed to us in the foreordained work of our Redeemer. We are reminded that the things of this world are corruptible; that is, they will all perish and decay. None of the things that men tend to set up as false gods can accomplish their redemption, but will only add to their punishment. Only the precious blood of Christ, through the power of God who raised Him from the dead, applied by the Spirit of holiness, can save lost sinners. Let us therefore determine by His grace to walk before Him with undivided loyalty.



Note: Only five lessons per week are included. You are encouraged to lead your family in worship seven days a week. On weekends, you may want to review or build upon the lessons from the previous week, discuss the sermon from Sunday morning, or work on questions from the Catechism or memory verses. These lesson suggestions are intended to provide a simple framework for parents to build upon. You are not limited to this content. The habit of morning and evening family worship is the biblical ideal. We hope you can use these lessons as a starting point for the development of a blessed practice of family worship in your home.