

FAMILY WORSHIP HELPS

WEEK 50

THIS WEEK'S FOCUS

QUESTION 52: *What are the reasons annexed to the second commandment?*

ANSWER: The reasons annexed to the second commandment are, God's sovereignty over us, his propriety in us, and the zeal he hath to his own worship.

MONDAY

Praise: Sing Psalm 45C

Scripture: Read Exodus 20:4-6; Psalm 95:1-11

Key Thought: *We should worship in the right manner because God is sovereign.*

Questions:

- ☞ In what words do we find “the reasons annexed to the 2nd commandment”?
- ☞ What does the word “sovereign” mean?
- ☞ Where do we see God's sovereignty in the reasons annexed to the 2nd commandment?
- ☞ How does the fact that God is sovereign affect the way that we are to worship Him?

Prayer

Notes: Some of this ground was covered under Question 49, but it is important to have a solid grounding in the reasons for the care and reverence that are to govern our worship of God. The bulk of the Ten Commandments come to us as simple statements without any explanation or elaboration, but there are a few that include explanatory remarks to clarify and enforce the statutes. The 2nd commandment is one of these. It contains an emphatic rationale for God's law against all idolatrous (i.e., man-centered) worship. This rationale, which the *Catechism* calls “the reasons annexed to the 2nd commandment,” is found in the words “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 first reason offered to enforce the 2nd commandment is the sovereignty of God, which appears in the simple, yet pregnant words, “*I am the LORD.*” From the fact that God is sovereign—that He is the Ruler and we are the subjects—it clearly follows that it is His prerogative, and not ours, to determine precisely how He is to be approached in worship. This is a simple observation, and yet one that is generally ignored by the greater number of professing Christians in our day, who presume that God will be pleased with whatever activities they decide to

present to Him as worship, and recoil at the very idea that the content of worship is limited to that which is clearly commanded in His own Word. Modern worship sees man, rather than God, as sovereign over the content of worship. The 2nd commandment, by contrast, requires us to begin with the acknowledgment of God's sovereignty over us.



TUESDAY



Praise: Sing Psalm 45C

Scripture: Read Isaiah 43:1-28

Key Thought: *We should worship in the right manner because we belong to God.*

Questions:

- ☪ What is meant by God's "propriety" in us?
- ☪ Where is this seen in the reasons annexed to the 2nd commandment?
- ☪ In what two senses does God "own" us? (see Acts 17:28; 1 Cor. 6:20)
- ☪ Which sense is meant in the reason annexed to the 2nd commandment?
- ☪ What influence should God's ownership of us as our Redeemer have upon the way in which we worship Him?

Prayer

Notes: The second reason annexed to the 2nd commandment is God's propriety in us, by which is meant His ownership of us as His people. This is seen in the words "*thy God*." There are two senses in which God is seen as the Owner of men. As the Creator He is the owner of all creatures and has the right to do with them as He will. As the Redeemer of His elect, He has bought them at a great price to be a special people for His glory. It is this second sense that is found in the words "*thy God*." In *Catechism on the Shorter Catechism*, James Fisher writes, "If we are His people: we are redeemed by the blood of his only begotten Son, and so under the strongest ties of duty and gratitude, to cleave to the precise manner of worship prescribed in His word, rejecting all other modes and forms whatever." It is interesting that some argue for more "freedom" in the content of Christian worship (by which is meant more self-expression) on the basis that Christ's death liberated us from the bonds of the law. This view reveals a deficient understanding of the work of Christ in relation to the law. It is true that He fulfilled the law for us, and delivered us from the obligations of its ceremonial requirements. But Christ's redemptive work did not release His people from obedience to His Word, for He says, "You are not your own; you were bought with a price," and "If you love Me, you will keep my commandments." Surely this includes His ordinances of worship.



WEDNESDAY



Praise: Sing Psalm 45C

Scripture: Read I Corinthians 10:13-22; Leviticus 10:1-11

Key Thought: *We should worship in the right manner because God is zealous for His worship.*

Questions:

- ☪ What is it for God to have zeal for His own worship?
- ☪ Why is it so offensive to God when His people add their own innovations to His appointed worship?
- ☪ How does Paul's exhortation to "flee from idolatry" apply to our approach to the content of our worship?

Prayer

Notes: The third reason annexed to the 2nd commandment is the zeal of God for His own worship. Fisher says that this zeal "is to have such a regard for the ordinances of His own institution, as highly to resent or revenge any addition to, or alteration of them; of which there is an awful instance in Nadab and Abihu, who offered strange fire before the Lord, Lev. 10:1-4." Human innovations in worship are greatly offensive to God because it is the very heart of idolatry for man to put himself in the place of God, determining what is acceptable or not acceptable to offer to Him. For this reason, it was important for Aaron and his sons to be able to distinguish between that which was "common" and "unclean" (i.e. man-centered) and that which was "holy" and "clean" (i.e. God-centered). The Apostle Paul also exhorts us to "flee from idolatry"; we should make every effort to avoid falling into false worship by mixing the vain inventions of men with commanded ordinances of God. Obedience to this exhortation would mean exercising the greatest care to ensure that nothing was done in our worship without a clear biblical warrant. To do less would be to provoke the Lord to jealousy.



THURSDAY



Praise: Sing Psalm 45C

Scripture: Read Exodus 20:4-6; John 14:15-15:14

Key Thought: *How we worship indicates whether we love or hate God.*

Questions:

- ☪ How are love and hatred toward God identified in Exodus 20:4-6?
- ☪ How does Jesus define love for Him? (John 14:15, 21, 23-24; 15:10, 14)
- ☪ Why is false worship counted as hatred toward God?

Prayer

Notes: The zeal that God has for His worship is seen in the threats and promises that accompany the 2nd commandment. Once more, the importance of worship as the central duty and privilege of the creature is seen in the fact that God defines love and hatred towards Himself in terms of obedience or disobedience to this commandment. "Those who hate Me" are those who corrupt

the worship of the one true God, while “those who love me” are the ones who keep His commandments and are careful not to add to them or take away from them. Jesus also defined love toward Himself in terms of “keeping His Word” and “obeying His commands.” Worship is, above all else, a response of the heart to God. The rebel may engage in outward acts of worship, but his heart has not been delivered from pride and self-centeredness. That pride will inevitably find expression in his worship as the will of the creature encroaches upon the revealed will of the Creator. By contrast, a work of true grace in the heart strips away pride and presumption so that the worshiper cannot conceive that he has anything worthy of offering to God in worship, while at the same time he is filled with delight in the commandments of the Lord.



FRIDAY



Praise: Sing Psalm 45C

Scripture: Read Deuteronomy 5:29-33

Key Thought: *God promises mercy to those who show their love for Him through obedience, particularly in the area of worship.*

Questions:

- ☪ What does it mean to love God?
- ☪ How is God’s mercy seen to be greater than His wrath?
- ☪ What benefits does God’s mercy convey to those who love Him?
(Ps. 94:18; Ps. 31:7; Ex. 15:13; 2 Sam. 7:15)

Prayer

Notes: The reasons annexed to the 2nd commandment conclude with a promise of mercy to thousands of generations of those who love God. Again, love for God is defined, not in terms of feeling and emotion, but in terms of obedience to His commandments. The promise of mercy far surpasses the threat of judgment to “show that God has far greater pleasure in the exercise of mercy, than in the venting of wrath, Ezek. 33:11; and likewise for an encouragement, both to parents and children, to aim at ‘walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless,’ Luke 1:6” (Fisher’s *Catechism on the Shorter Catechism*). The benefits of God’s mercy conveyed to those who love Him include strength, joy, comfort, direction, and perseverance. The chief means through which this mercy is conveyed are, of course, the appointed ordinances of God in His worship.



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.