

“How to Make Godly Decisions, Part 2”
(Lord’s Day School, 6-10-01)

We are looking in this series at how we can discover God’s will for our lives, how we can have the confidence that when we make choices, we have the Lord’s blessing on them.

Last week, we spent our time considering the two ways the Bible speaks of God’s will. Can anyone tell me what they were? (His will of decree and His will of precept.) Can anyone tell me what the difference is between the two? (His will of precept is what He commands all men to do, His will of decree is what He has planned they will actually do.) Is it possible to live according to God’s decretive will? (In one sense it isn’t, and in another, it’s impossible not to. We don’t know what it is, so we can’t make decisions based on it. But on the other hand, it is what God has planned, so everything we have done, do, or will do in life is according to it.) But is it possible to live according to God’s preceptive will? (Yes, with the Lord’s help. The Lord tells us what it is so that we can.) Let’s begin this morning, then, by looking at the first commandment, and what we can learn from it about how to make godly choices.

- II. What is the first commandment? “You shall have no other gods before Me” (Ex. 20:3). Let’s consider for a moment what this means.
- A. First, what does it mean to have a god?
1. It means to have something that you worship.
 2. But it can also mean to have something that you give your heart to, something that you love more than anyone or anything else.
- B. But now secondly, what does this commandment tell us about whom we should have as our God?
1. It tells us that we should have the true and only God as our God, that we should worship Him only and love Him most of all.
 2. Now what else does this tell us? It tells us that we should worship no other gods, and that we love nothing else more than Him.
- C. Let’s begin with the fact that this commandment tells us that we should have nothing else in our lives that we give our love and devotion to more than God, and that we are to worship nothing else but the true God.
1. The Ten Commandments, as we will see, are stronger in the Hebrew than they appear in English.
 - a. In the first commandment, the Hebrew literally says, “There shall *never* be to you strange gods before My face.” We must never worship anything else, or love anything else before God’s face.
 - b. Where is God’s face? It is everywhere, since He is everywhere. Since this is true, then we should be careful in all places and at all times that we don’t let this happen.

2. What kinds of things are there that we could be in danger of worshiping instead of God?
 - a. As Christians, there isn't too much danger of our worshiping someone other than the true God, at least those gods that are obviously false. For instance, are you tempted to worship Allah, or the Mormon god Elohim, or Krishna? I don't think so.
 - b. But are there other ways that Christians could be in danger of breaking this command? Yes. By having false ideas of the true God.
 - c. What are some of the false ideas that are in the church today?
 - (i) God is only a god of love. I've seen how this can lead some people astray into denying that God will ever judge the wicked.
 - (ii) God is only a god of wrath. He won't save anyone.
 - (iii) God is not triune. The United Pentecostal Church and the Apostolic Church believe this. And yet there are denominations of Orthodox Protestant Christians that believe that these churches are true churches. But this is so big an error, that it actually excludes them from the kingdom.
 - (iv) God is not sovereign. He doesn't have control over what happens in the lives of men.
 - (v) God doesn't know all things. He really doesn't know what's going to happen in the future. Everything is a surprise to Him.
 - (vi) God isn't interested in holiness, but only in how healthy you are or in how much you prosper.
 - (vii) I think you get the picture. There are many errors in the church, not only about who God is and what He is like, but also about what God wants us to do.
 - d. Now how can knowing this help us make godly decisions?
 - (i) Certainly, when we are choosing which church we want to go to, we need to pick one that holds to and proclaims the true God.
 - (ii) This is also important in choosing the god we want to be our god and the god our household will worship. We want to make sure that we understand the true God in the right way, so that we will also understand what He wants from us, and why He does the things that He does.

3. But now what kinds of things would we be in danger of *loving* more than God?
 - a. Persons: Ourselves, husband, wife, children, sports figures, actors, etc.
 - b. Possessions: Cars, houses, money, etc.
 - c. Vocations: Doctor, lawyer, politician, professor, etc.
 - d. Positions of influence and authority: ecclesiastical, judicial, governmental, etc.
 - e. Recreations: Baseball, football, basketball, boxing, skiing, golf, etc.
 - f. God says we need to love Him more than these things. Now how does this help us make godly decisions?
 - (i) First of all, it tells us that we need to watch over our hearts carefully to make sure that they don't become entangled with any ungodly person or

thing.

- (ii) Whenever we begin to love anything more than God, it will begin to make us set aside His other commandments.
- (iii) How many young men or women do you know who ended up getting involved with and marrying an unbeliever? How do you think this happened? Their hearts got involved with persons they never should have. And then they set God's commandments aside that tells us not to enter into an unequal yoke, and they married an unbeliever.
- (iv) But do you know that we can break this commandment even in an equal yoke? A husband can begin to love his wife more than God, and a wife her husband. Parents can love their children more than God, and children their parents. Some can even become so enamored with themselves, that they love themselves more than God, and seek their own pleasure more than God's glory. But remember what Jesus says in Luke 14:26-27, "If anyone comes to Me, and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be My disciple. Whoever does not carry his own cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple." We must beware of loving anything more than God. This will affect the way we decide to direct our affections.
- (v) Some are vulnerable to positions, some to possessions, some to vocations, and some to recreations. What would you think of a person who gets very excited at a baseball or football game and wouldn't dare miss one, or maybe misses a service to go to one, but doesn't get excited about the Lord and doesn't have any problem missing a worship service? It would appear that he loves that sport more than he loves God.
- (vi) This tells us that we need to know our own heart. We are all susceptible to certain things. All of us have at least one thing that we are more vulnerable to than others. We need to watch over our hearts that they don't fall in love with *anything* more than the Lord. Whatever that particular thing is for us, we must be careful not to fall into its power. Use it sparing if possible. Stay away from it if necessary.

D. And so we must not love *anything* more than God. But secondly, we must love *God* more than anything else.

1. Moses writes in Deuteronomy 6:4-5, "Hear, O Israel! The LORD is our God, the LORD is one! And you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might." Christ quoted this verse to the scribe who asked Him what the greatest commandment in the Law was.
2. Now what does it mean to love God?
 - a. Of course, it means we are to worship Him alone. But what else does it mean?
 - b. When you love someone, do you think about them? Yes. We should think about God, we should meditate on Him.
 - c. When you love someone, do you want to please them? Yes. We should try to please God by doing the things that He loves.

- d. When you love someone, how will you feel when you offend them? Sad, sorry. When we fail to keep God's commandments, we should be sad.
 - e. When you love someone, do you desire to be with them? Yes. Do you delight in them? Yes. We should desire to be with God, to have communion with Him. We should never feel at peace when we are not walking with Him.
 - f. If you love God, should you obey Him? Of course. How should you obey Him? Zealously. The more you love God, the more you will serve Him.
3. Now how can this influence the choices we make?
- a. It will help us to be careful not to allow ourselves to love anyone or anything more than God.
 - b. When we find ourselves loving someone or something else more than God, we will either give that thing up, or put it back in its place, or stay away from it. How can we tell that we love something more than God? We spend more time with that person or thing, or more time thinking about it, and when we spend time with it, it makes us love it more and God less.
 - c. It will make us very careful about whom we choose for our close friends. We will choose those who will help us in our relationship with the Lord, and not those who will lead us away. This is especially important in the choice of a spouse, even if they are a Christian.
 - d. When we are faced with a choice that requires us to set aside any part of God's Law, we won't do it, such as if a job requires that we lie, or break the law of our land, or work on the Lord's Day, we won't take it. If a scholarship requires that we play sports on the Lord's Day, we'll turn it down.
 - e. When we are making a decision to buy something, whether it's a car, or a house, or anything else, we won't buy it if it possesses us, rather than our possessing it.
 - f. If we are in danger of loving anything more than God, if we can't overcome that love and put it back in its proper place, we will stay away from it.
 - g. These are just some of the ways that the first commandment can help us to make godly choices. Next week, we'll take a look at the second commandment. Let's pray.