

Do I worship other gods? – Exodus 20:3 (cf Deu 5:7)

INTRODUCTION

A Reminder that to break One means breaking All – If a believer breaks one of the Ten Commandments, he is breaking all ten of the commandments. **James 2:10-11**, *“For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all. For he that said, Do not commit adultery, said also, Do not kill. Now if thou commit no adultery, yet if thou kill, thou art become a transgressor of the law.”* Out of the 613 commandments in the OT, God chose these Ten Commandments to be used to measure our lives.

In the life of the believer, it is easy to slip into breaking the first commandment. It is a common thing and pitfall to regard someone else in our lives as more important than God. However, we do not see it as a pitfall because of the commonality of this experience all around us. The world is filled to overflowing with people who are idolatrous. The world has everyone in their hearts as most important other than the one living and true God. Therefore, when the believer backslides and allows himself to succumb to this common sin, he does not see it as a pitfall. Since it is not a pit that he has fallen into, he does not see the need to get out of it. He remains in this pit for a long time. By the time he finds out it will probably be too late.

It is not too late to repent but it is too late to undo the damage that this sin can do in his life and in the lives of the people whom he regards as more important than God. When this commandment is broken, the other nine are broken as well. What it means is that obedience to the other nine would be futile. God will not acknowledge and accept the obedience of the other nine if the first one is broken.

God made this the First Commandment for a reason. The reason is that our relationship with God is of great importance to Him. Remember that as a child of God we can/are able to obey all the Ten Commandments including this First Commandment!

- I. **COMMANDMENT ONE** -- *Thou shalt have no other gods before me.* (Exodus 20:3; cf Deu 5:7).

The literal translation – “Thou shall not have to yourselves other gods on my face.”

THE EXPLANATION – Using an anthropomorphic expression (on my face) the LORD wanted to impress on Israel that the One they look at has to be the face of God and not any other gods. By way of application it means that God must be first and foremost in every aspect of the believer’s life. There must not be anything or anyone more important than God. This means that every aspect of our God-given life must glorify His Holy Name. The Christian is not to pit one doctrine of God against another or to sacrifice one area to promote another. All areas of his life must honour God.

Based upon the literal translation of the verse, the First Commandment means more than just having God as first in our lives.

It means that when we worship other gods it is the same as replacing the face of God with the face of another. It could be the golden or silver idols or even the face of our loved ones who caused us to fall into sin. It is their face that is the focus in this literal translation.

- II. “other gods” explained** – The idols here include the tangible as well as the intangible. The tangible would be all objects of worship made of gold, silver, wood, stone or any material.

The tangible idols also include our children, parents, spouses, or any other human beings or things such as cars, homes, money, jobs, etc.

The intangible idols would be our ambitions, pride, face, name, promotions, accolades of man, etc.

Anything or anyone that is of this earth or heaven must not be more important to us than God, if we are Christians.

- III. Breaking this Commandment** -- Anyone who breaks this commandment will answer to God.

He will be severely dealt with. In the case of a witch, it would be death. **Exodus 22:18**, *“Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live.”* To consult a witch and allow a witch who practises black magic to remain in the Land of Promise would be an abomination to God. The witch must be killed. In the case of worship or sacrifice to any idol, it would also be death. **Exodus 22:20**, *“He that sacrificeth unto any god, save unto the LORD only, he shall be utterly destroyed.”* The phrase “utterly destroyed” means “to be killed without mercy.”

All forms of superstition, geomancy and language like lucky, good or bad luck are fruits of idolatry. These must be avoided by all believers.

- IV. Obedience of this commandment measures salvation -- No acceptance of discipleship by Christ if this commandment is not obeyed** -- **Matthew 10:37-39**, *“He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me. He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it.”*

This text answers the question of what if I have other idols or gods before, i.e. in front of, God and replace His face with another.

Also in **Luke 14:26-27**, *“If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my*

disciple. And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple."

This is the first and most basic requirement of anyone who wishes to follow Christ. This is salvation in a nutshell. To be a Christian is to be a disciple. He must therefore not have any idol before God.

- V. Stating the First Commandment positively -- Deuteronomy 6:4-5, "Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD: And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might."**

Matthew 22:37-40 "Jesus said unto him, **Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. 38 This is the first and great commandment. 39 And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. 40 On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets."**

Mark 12:28-34 "And one of the scribes came, and having heard them reasoning together, and perceiving that he had answered them well, asked him, Which is the first commandment of all? **29** And Jesus answered him, **The first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God is one Lord: 30 And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment. 31 And the second is like, namely this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these. 32** And the scribe said unto him, Well, Master, thou hast said the truth: for there is one God; and there is none other but he: **33** And to love him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the soul, and with all the strength, and to love *his* neighbour as himself, is more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices. **34** And when Jesus saw that he answered discreetly, he said unto him, **Thou art not far from the kingdom of God.** And no man after that durst ask him *any question."*

Luke 10:27, "And he answering said, **Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself."**

To put God first is to love Him with all our heart, mind, strength and soul. This is the Abraham-Isaac principle that we need to exercise time and time again. We need to know this from experience and not in theory.

There must be no area in our lives where God is not honoured. Which is more important in the believer's life - family, church, job, ministry, recreation, or self?

- VI. Obey this commandment in practical terms –** To put God first is to love Him with our all. This means that we must give of our tithes and time and substance and our all to Him.

Exodus 22:29-31, *"Thou shalt not delay to offer the first of thy ripe fruits, and of thy liquors: the firstborn of thy sons shalt thou give unto me. Likewise shalt thou do with thine oxen, and with thy sheep: seven days it shall be with his dam; on the eighth day thou shalt give it me. And ye shall be holy men unto me: neither shall ye eat any flesh that is torn of beasts in the field; ye shall cast it to the dogs."*

The Christian cannot be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. **Exodus 23:32-33**, *"Thou shalt make no covenant with them, nor with their gods. They shall not dwell in thy land, lest they make thee sin against me: for if thou serve their gods, it will surely be a snare unto thee."* This is a grievous sin against God.

The First Commandment is the basis for the doctrine of biblical separation.

APPLICATION –

- **Check all areas of your life to see if God is glorified;**
- **Do not lean on your own strength to obey this commandment;**
- **Pray without ceasing;**
- **Keep on studying and reading the Bible to know the mind of Christ in order to obey this commandment;**
- **Keep away from sin;**
- **Run towards obedience to the Word of God.**

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Can you explain the difference between the impact of this First Commandment on a believer and an unbeliever?
2. If I study or work for the sake of my family, does that mean that I have broken the First Commandment?
3. In light of the First Commandment, how would you advise a new believer who is engaged to an unbeliever and wedding plans had already been made? (The plans and the relationship were made before salvation.)
4. A young man who professes to be a Christian occupies his time well in church on Sundays; but during the rest of the week he is absorbed in matters of the world. He does not share the gospel but he is a diligent and conscientious worker who keeps his faith a secret. Would you say that this person has transgressed the First Commandment? Would you dare to even consider that this person might not be born again?
5. "Parents who only place emphasis on their children's studies and future job opportunities in this world have transgressed the First Commandment." Do you agree with this statement? Please give reasons for your answer.