

## Heidelberg Catechism 96 – Proper Worship

Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ: God teaches you in the 1<sup>st</sup> law that you must love, trust, and honor him – Jehovah God – who created you and re-created you in Jesus Christ. In this 2<sup>nd</sup> law God teaches you how to worship him.

Of course it will appear that the law only addresses the issue of images, but that is just the letter of the law. The scope of the law is much bigger. Remember how the 7<sup>th</sup> command speaks against adultery? Yet the law really covers all kinds of impurity, including lusts. So the 2<sup>nd</sup> command covers all areas of worship.

Our headings are: **Forbidden Things**, and **Required Things**.

Our goals are: That **you will be moved to worship God better, knowing he has said exactly how you must worship, and you will be moved to worship God better because he saved us through Christ.**

### **96 Q. WHAT IS GOD'S WILL FOR US IN THE SECOND COMMANDMENT?**

**A.** That we in no way make any image of God nor worship him in any other way than he has commanded in his Word.

### **Prescription of the Law**

#### **1. Let us say the command together.**

Exodus 20: 4 "You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth; 5 you shall not bow down to them nor serve them. For I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and fourth generations of those who hate Me, 6 but showing mercy to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments.

#### **2. You are required to worship God, but only in the way that he commanded in his Word.**

- a. None of the elements of worship is left for your imagination.
- b. The day of worship is not left to your imagination. Those who have moved worship to Saturday night so people can have Sunday for themselves are not honoring the Lord.
- c. How worship is led and supervised is not left to your imagination. (Male leadership, for example, is required.)
- d. God placed the severest严厉的 judgment on those who perverted败坏 his worship.

#### **3. Consider how God showed his displeasure with unacceptable worship.**

Look at what God did to the High Priest's sons!

Leviticus 10:1 Then Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, each took his censer香炉 and put fire in it, put incense on it, and offered profane fire before the LORD, which He had not commanded them. 2 So fire went out from the LORD and devoured them, and they died before the LORD.

Consider Korah who wanted to be like a priest during the days of Moses and how God dealt with him.

Numbers 16: 3 They gathered together against Moses and Aaron, and said to them, "You take too much upon yourselves, for all the congregation is holy, every one of them, and the LORD is among them. Why then do you exalt yourselves above the assembly of the LORD?" 35 And a fire came out from the LORD and consumed the two hundred and fifty men who were offering incense.

And then Eli who was indifferent about how his sons led worship!

1 Samuel 2:12 Now the sons of Eli were corrupt; they did not know the LORD. 29 'Why do you kick at My sacrifice and My offering which I have commanded in My dwelling place, and honor your sons more than Me, to make yourselves fat with the best of all the offerings of Israel My people?' 31 **'Behold, the days are coming that I will cut off your arm and the arm of your father's house,** so that there will not be an old man in your house.

God killed **Ananias and Sapphira** for their corruption of worship and killed those who misused the **Lord's Supper**.

#### **4. So how does God want to be worshipped?** You are to worship with prayer, singing, reading and preaching of the Scriptures, and the sacraments. So don't look to strange idols...or they will pollute your mind- like looking at a prostitute 妓女 can pollute your heart.

**5. Proper worship must be done with preparation and with a pure heart.** Who goes to Parliament to make a speech without preparation? And who would dare to go to the throne of heaven unprepared? If you come tired and exhausted from staying up too late and playing computer games, is that pleasing to the Lord? If you come to worship with grudge 怨恨 against your neighbor...or husband...or wife...or children, will God hear your worship? If your mind is overrun by work, how can you worship properly? You must fix everything that hinders you worship.

Matthew 5:23 "Therefore if you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, 24 "leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way. First **be reconciled and offer your gift.**

**6. You must learn to form a proper picture of God in your mind.** See God's majesty, glory, and holiness...not the fake picture of tall and handsome Caucasian. That is a sinful image that pollutes your homes and your heart.

John 4: 23 "But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him. 24 "God is Spirit, and **those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.**"

**7. You must search out your lives and see if there are images and destroy them.**

Deuteronomy 7:5 But thus shall you deal with them: you shall **break down their altars, and dash in pieces their pillars, and hew 劈 down their Asherim, and burn their graven images with fire.**

God may remove any other gods you lift up before his face. **Think what that may mean to you!**

## **Prohibitions of the law**

**1. You are not to make any image of the true God whatsoever...**The lawyer Christian might argue: What does "make" mean? Doesn't it only forbid things that are put together – like something formed with the hand? Well the word "make" means to carve, chisel 凿, mold 塑造, or shape in any form. So drawings are graven images. **But there is another part of this command many miss: You shall not make any "likeness" of God.** This includes anyone pretending to be Christ – like in movies. The Gospel is not to be spread with movies, but with the lively preaching of God's word. **Why are images bad?** An image debases 降低 God to created materials.

Deuteronomy 4:15 "Take careful heed to yourselves, for you saw no form when the LORD spoke to you at Horeb out of the midst of the fire, 16 "lest you act corruptly and make for yourselves a carved image in the form of any figure: the likeness of male or female,

This verse is often ignored by those who want to have nice, but idolatrous paintings in their homes. God says how you worship him. You don't worship God according to your desire!

**This has always been a challenge for Israel to understand throughout its history and so God had to warn them.** They were not to MAKE idols. Consider the times of Isaiah and the warning he gave!

Isaiah 40:18 To whom then will you liken 比作 God? Or what likeness will you compare to Him? 19 **The workman molds an image, The goldsmith overspreads it with gold, And the silversmith casts silver chains.**

**2. You are not to worship any images – of the true God or of false gods.** Most people recognize this so we won't belabor that point today, but I would add that you should avoid joining in any ceremony with those who are worshipping **idols like Hindus.**

**3. You are not to use images to "help" you worship the true God.** That is what the Israelites did when they worshipped the golden serpent which represented Christ.

2Kings 18: 3 And he (Hezekiah) did what was right in the sight of the LORD, according to all that his father David had done. 4 He removed the high places and broke the sacred pillars, cut down the wooden image and broke in pieces the bronze serpent that Moses had made; for until those days the children of Israel burned incense to it, and called it Nehushtan.

You are not even to be with those who do—like Roman Catholics. Some Roman Catholics claim that they worship God with the heart, but they worship the image of Christ only with their bodies. That is senseless. Other Roman Catholics argue that they only use the image as medium, not as a god. They are not told to do so. God hates those who try to change his worship.

#### **4. You are not to make or worship any image of any other gods.**

Deuteronomy 12: 30 "take heed to yourself that you are not ensnared使入陷阱 to follow them, after they are destroyed from before you, and that you do not inquire after their gods, saying, 'How did these nations serve their gods? I also will do likewise.' 31 "You shall not worship the LORD your God in that way; for every abomination to the LORD which He hates they have done to their gods; for they burn even their sons and daughters in the fire to their gods.

This was also a challenge for Gentiles. They corrupted worship by using idols.

Acts 17:29 "Therefore, since we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Divine Nature is like gold or silver or stone, something shaped by art and man's devising.

Romans 1:22 Professing to be wise, they became fools, 23 and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man—and birds and four-footed animals and creeping things.

**Sometimes the other "gods" is yourself.** For instance, Saul's stubbornness, refusing worship God as God required, made himself into an idol. He was a living being, but an idol nonetheless.

1Samuel 15: 22 Then Samuel said: "Has the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, As in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, And to heed than the fat of rams. 23 For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, And stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of the LORD, He also has rejected you from being king."

#### **8. You are not to worship the true God in strange ways! Don't use strange tongues, divination占卜, pray to Mary, or use candles (Dr. Pipa referred to erroneous view of Advent Candles), or drama. You are not to use flags. You are not to worship God in any corrupted way.**

I hope you can see today that the letter of law 2 may be narrow, but the spirit is extremely broad. The law is much broader than "not worshipping idols."

#### **Conclusion:**

God is your Creator. God is your Re-Creator. Because of that **God wants your worship.** Remember these words: *Deuteronomy 5:29* 'Oh, that they had such a heart in them that they would fear Me and always keep all My commandments, that it might be well with them and with their children forever! **God tells his children how they are to worship him.** And **God will violently destroy those who don't worship him** at all **or those who pollute his worship** or **worship him alongside other gods.** Remember, he is a jealous God... God's name implies force.

Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ: **One man wrote: "Christians are prone to idol worship as dry wood is to fire."** He was right. Man likes the easy way, and it is easy to worship idols. And because man likes control, he likes images that he can control. **In order to worship God in the way he requires, you must then stay close to God.** Just as a man who is close to his wife is less likely to commit adultery, so if you stay close to God you are less likely to commit spiritual adultery - idolatry. So feed on his love letter. Then worship God the way he says, not how you want...even if what you want might seem better. God richly blesses those who do their duty and properly worship him.

Finally, do you have some idol that you worship in your life? If you are not a Christian, you do. Everyone has a god or gods. The true God will make you suffer if you will not bow, confess, and worship him as the one true God of heaven and earth. But you can avoid that suffering by asking God to make you his child on account of Christ taking the punishment that rightly belongs to you.