



January 29, 2023

Abounding Grace: The Grace of the Law
Worship in Spirit and Truth

Exodus 20:4-6

For Discussion and Reflection (You will need a copy of the Westminster Confession of Faith (WCF), which you can find on the internet.)

1. Moses reminds Israel that they “saw no form on the day that the LORD spoke to you.” (Dt. 4:15) Jesus insists that true worshippers, worship God in “spirit and in truth.” (John 4:23,24) Why does God insist on being formless?
2. Doug Stuart highlights the motives for idolatry. Consider each of these. It’s a guaranteed result because the deity is contained; it’s selfish because worship obligates the god to reciprocate; it’s easy because ethical living is excluded by ritual; it’s convenient because we can place the deity wherever we want, literally enshrining it; it’s normal to the culture, so we don’t stand out; it’s logical since each deity has specific areas of influence rather than being a general practitioner; it’s pleasing since it often involves elaborate decorations; it’s indulgent since worship often includes drunkenness and gluttony; it’s erotic since it often includes sexual expression. How does idolatry diminish the living God? Where do you see this in our culture today?
3. Some have used our text to argue against artistic expressions of things in heaven, earth, or sea. Artistic expression is not what’s in view here. Even God commanded the images of angels on the Tabernacle, Exodus 26:1. How then do we understand the limitation associated with creating images? The image must have a purpose in alignment with what is forbidden.
4. In our text, God says that he is jealous. In Exodus 34:14, he is jealous for his people’s loyalty. In Isaiah 42:8, he is jealous for his own glory. In Isaiah 48:9-11, he’s jealous for both, his name, and his people. How can God’s jealousy be a righteous thing? Would it be righteous for him to surrender his glory or his covenant people?
5. Idols, in whatever form, are assumed to house the presence of the deity they image. They are used to venerate the deity and access its power (its imagined power). Israel attempted this with God in Exodus 32:1-8, creating a golden calf and calling it “Jehovah”. They used the Ark of the Covenant like this in 1 Samuel 4:1-11. They even considered the temple as a “good luck charm” in Jeremiah 7:1-15. What is the key issue behind mankind’s imbuing objects with spiritual power? How does this diminish God?
6. Worship in the modern church often centers around the congregation experiencing an emotional connection. Is there a difference between an emotional experience and a spiritual experience? Can efforts to manipulate and control emotions be a form of idolatry? How can modern worship services diminish God and exalt the worshipper?
7. God insists that he does not punish children for their parents’ sins. (Consider, Deuteronomy 24:16 and Ezekiel 18:20.) At the same time, our text says that he visits the sins of the parents on the children. This isn’t contradictory but hereditary. Parents train their children in idolatry. God is saying that the children can’t use the excuse, “But I learned this from my parents.” This should make us consider the beliefs and practices that we are passing on to our children. Prayerfully consider what you are teaching your children about God. Does anything need to be addressed?
8. How does your heart toward worship need to change based on our study today?