

The Ten Commandments Sermons from the Heidelberg Catechism

Part I

Rev. G. Van Reenen

"Many ministers have written sermons on the fifty-two Lord's Days as we find them in our Heidelberg Catechism. One of these ministers and servants of the Most High, is the late Rev. G. Van Reenen, of the Netherlands. When he was not able to preach any more because of a throat ailment, God inclined his heart to write sermons, and work while it was day. This work he continued until the day of his death in the year 1946. Rev. Van Reenen has written these sermons for the common people. In all these sermons he breathes the spirit of humility and self-denial. Throughout all these sermons he indicates the necessity of knowing by experience these three important parts, misery, redemption, and gratitude, as he himself was not a stranger thereof. Rev. Van Reenen does not know that his Catechism sermons and others have been translated into the English language. He confessed in his life not to be worthy of any honor or praise; that we may then by grace give all honor and praise to Israel's God and King, saying with the Psalmist, "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto Thy name give glory, for Thy mercy and for Thy truth's sake." Psalm 115:1. (Pastor J. Van Zweden).

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“THE LAW OF GOD AND ITS FIRST COMMANDMENT”

Psalter No.40 St. 3,4,5.
Read Hebrews 12.
Psalter No.435 st. 1,
Psalter No.222 St. 5.
Psalter No.333 St. 1, 2,3,4.

XXXIV. LORD'S DAY.

Beloved hearers! It was an eternally memorable event which took place in the desert of Arabia on the fiftieth day after the exodus of the children of Israel out of Egypt. For at that time the Lord, amid thunders and lightnings as symbols of His awful majesty, proclaimed His holy law as the constitution of His house.

What an awesome event it was is evident from the careful preparations made. That people which the Lord in His sovereignty had chosen as His own peculiar people, were

wrought upon in a special manner to be a people in which He would manifest all His glory. The Lord had promised them that they would be a kingdom of priests, and a holy people to whom He would show all His goodness and grace if they would obey His voice unconditionally.

At the Lord's command Moses had set bounds about the mount. He had called to the people that they should sanctify themselves and be ready on the third day. He had solemnly charged them that they should not go up to the Lord, nor even touch the mountain, lest they be put to death.

Then the third day has dawned. Since early morning Sinai shows itself in an entirely different light, the whole mountain has changed its appearance. Amidst thunders and lightnings the King of kings, descends as the Highest Lawgiver.

Is it any wonder that the mountain quaked and trembled since feet of the Creator and Judge of heaven and earth stand upon its summit? Is it any wonder that Sinai sent up smoke as a furnace, and flames of fire proclaim the fearful majesty of Jehovah of hosts to the thousands of Israel?

And then suddenly the voice of God resounds in the ears of that living and listening people: "I am the Lord, thy God which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage."

Dreadful was the effect. All Israel quaked and trembled. Yea, they prayed that God would no more speak to them, for they could not endure it; so that they even wanted to flee from the sound of God's voice. And Moses, that great man of God, said, "I exceedingly fear and quake."

And now we are called to tarry a few weeks at that ever memorable place, to meditate upon the ten commandments of God.

Nay, people of God, in discussing the law of the Lord we shall not put a yoke upon you which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear. But we hope to present the Law to you as an amiable rule of life.

You will find our text in Exod. 20:1-3. "And God spake all these words saying, I am the Lord thy God, which hath brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. Thou shalt have no other gods before Me."

Upon these words our catechetical instruction is based as you will find recorded in the Heidelberg Catechism:

XXXIV. LORD'S DAY.

Q. 92. What is the law of God?

A. God spake all these words, Exodus 20, Deut. 5, saying: I am the Lord thy God, which hath brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.

I. Thou shalt have no other gods before me.

II. Thou shalt not make unto thyself any graven image, nor the likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or in the earth beneath, or in the waters under the earth. Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them; 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.

III. Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain; for the Lord will not hold him guiltless, that taketh his name in vain.

IV. Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy; six days shalt thou labor and do all thy work; but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God; In it thou shalt do no manner of work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy man servant, nor thy maid servant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates. For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day, and hallowed it.

V. Honor thy father and thy mother, that thy days may be long In the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee.

VI. Thou shalt not kill.

VII. Thou shalt not commit adultery.

VIII. Thou shalt not steal.

IX. Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor.

X. Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's house; thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's wife, nor his man servant, nor his maid servant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing that is thy neighbor's.

Q. 93. How are these commandments divided?

A. Into two tables; the first of which teaches us how we must behave towards God; the second, what duties we owe to our neighbor.

Q. 94. What doth God enjoin In the first commandment?

A. That I, as sincerely as I desire the salvation of my own soul, avoid and flee from all idolatry, sorcery, soothsaying, superstition, Invocation of saints, or any other creatures; and learn rightly to know the only true God; trust In him alone, with humility and patience submit to him; expect all good things from him only; love, fear and glorify him with my whole heart; so that I renounce and forsake all creatures, rather than commit even the least thing contrary to his will.

Q. 95. What is idolatry?

A. Idolatry is, instead of, or besides that one true God, who has manifested himself in his word, to contrive, or have any other object, in which men place their trust.

Dear hearers!

Upon the question "What are good works," the Instructor answers, "Only those which proceed from a true faith, are performed according to the law of God, and to His glory." Because the law of God is our rule for good works, and because it teaches us how God wants us to serve and thank Him, therefore it is discussed at this time in detail.

You know that God gave to the people of Israel, a three fold law: the civil law, the ceremonial law and the moral law, that is the Ten Commandments, It is well to keep this ever in mind. If then you read in God's Word, "Christ is the end of the law" and "I am not come to destroy the law," you will understand that these statements do not contradict each other. Christ is the end of the ceremonial law, that is of those sacrifices and cleansings and bathings performed in the temple. Of these Christ the true sacrifice, the true Priest, is the end. But the law which Christ does not destroy are the ten commandments, which are an everlasting law.

In the second Lord's Day the Instructor has already explained the law's demand, and now he comes back to it. Does he wish to bring us again into bondage to Moses?

Nay, beloved, that the Instructor will not and shall not do.

The traveler to heaven also faces the law twice. After God has led His people out of bondage to sin, He brings them to Sinai, so that they may learn to know their sins and misery. The law then becomes for them a schoolmaster to Christ. From Sinai the Holy Spirit goes with them to Calvary. But then He leads us back again to Sinai.

But what a difference! The first time we stood there as a slave before his stern master. Then we trembled as did Israel of old. Then we cried with Isaiah, "Woe is me, for I am undone!" Then we wanted to flee from Him Who is a devouring fire and an everlasting burning to the guilty sinner. But as we come there the second time, we stand as a child before his father, as a beloved disciple before his beloved master. Then we sing, "The Lord's commands which I have loved, shall still new joy impart."

People of God, it is pure goodness that the dear Lord was willing to proclaim that law again. God had written His law in Adam's heart, so that he knew instinctively what was well pleasing to God, and he was also able to live accordingly. But because of sin that knowledge is lost, although some of it has remained in the conscience, so that the Gentiles do by nature the things contained in the law. But conscience is not dependable. However, God Who is good, gave the law again. What a precious gift the law is!

Those ten commandments are for the child of God what the compass is for the mariner. It is for us what a guide is for a stranger. Therefore David prayed, "I am a stranger in the earth, hide not Thy commandments from me." It guides all our actions.

In the original the law has two significant names: thora which means instruction and nomos which means law or custom. And, the Lord willing, we shall hear how the law instructs us, both to our shame and to our comfort, and that it gives to everyone his portion.

Allow me to remark first that the Law not only sees and judges our external actions but also is a discernor of the attitude of our heart. It judges not only the actual sin but also the occasion to sin. And when it forbids a sin, it commands the opposing virtue.

Let us then in accordance with the 93rd Question and Answer notice the remarkable division of the law.

It cannot surprise us that before the Catechism Instructor begins to explain the spiritual meaning of the law, he first inquires into the division of the law and its ramifications, so that we would thoroughly understand its coherence and contents and the purpose of the Lord in giving His law to man, especially to His people.

From the word of God we know that God Himself inscribed that law upon two tables of stone, of which the first contained four and the second contained six of the ten commandments.

The Roman Catholics and the Lutherans have made the first and second commandments into one, while they made two commandments out of the tenth one. This was done to legalize their image worship. I think it unnecessary to show the foolishness of this attempt. For, in the first and second commandment two distinct sins are named, while the tenth commandment mentions but one sin, covetousness, as we shall hear later.

The demand of the first table is love to God.

God loves Himself before and above all else. You must not think this is the same as our sinful self-love. God is the Most high, and as such He loves above all that which is perfect and highest, that is: Himself.

Therefore God will that man shall love Him first of all. That was the purpose of creation; that is also the purpose of re-creation. That is also the demand of the first table of the law.

And when the Holy Spirit regenerates the sinner, it also becomes his desire, his prayer and his aim that above all else God may be known, loved, honored and praised by himself, by all those dear and precious to him, yea, by all people, by all creatures.

And then the Lord Himself tells how that must be done. As the only God He wants to be served and glorified, and that not in a material way, by image worship, but in Spirit and truth. He wants His Name to be honored and His day to be hallowed.

The demand of the second table is: love to thy neighbor.

God created all mankind of one blood, and therefore it is all one large family. This is especially true of God's people, who have all come forth from one womb, the womb of God's good pleasure.

And now notice what tender care the Lord has for man as His creature, and especially for His children: In the fifth commandment He guards the honor of our parents and other authorities. By the sixth commandment He protects our life, by the seventh our marriage bonds. By the eighth commandment He protects our possessions. In the ninth commandment He cares for our good name, and in the tenth commandment, He takes care of our contentment.

The purpose of the entire law is a world of love! an ocean of blessedness! a holy peace! "Great peace has he who loves Thy law." Yea, the purpose is a paradise here below and hereafter.

Just imagine that everyone kept that law, what a pleasure life would be.

**Oh! were all people wise;
And then also did well!
The world were then a paradise,
Now it is oft a hell.**

Let us now speak about its impressive introduction.

"I am the Lord thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage." I ask you: is that not an impressive introduction. The dear Lord according to His great goodness wished to place the gospel of grace above His law.

We said it was impressive, in the first place because of the Person who is here speaking. For it is the Lord; the Creator of the ends of the earth who speaks, "I am the Lord."

The purpose of His speaking thus is to awaken immediately in His people a deep reverence and holy fear, so that with holy awe and child-like fear they shall hear what the God of the oath and of the covenant speaks to them.

“I am the Lord, the Jehovah!” With these words the Lord says, “I am the All-sufficient covenant God. I am sufficient for you for all eternity. Who will and can and shall fill you with all blessedness eternally. I am that God Who shall not repent of that which I once have spoken, Who in My threatenings as well as in My promises am unchangeable, Who shall always be and remain the same.”

What a terrible threat this introduction contains for all wicked men, for all hypocrites who are yet without God and Christ. For them the all-sufficiency of God is a dreadful condemnation, for it declares to them that all their works are an abomination to God, that He has no need of their fleshly sacrifice. At the same time it declares that God is also unchangeable in all the threatenings He has proclaimed over the wicked and the hypocrites. But also, what a comfort it contains for all God's concerned people, when the Lord says, “I am the All-sufficient Covenant God.

You need bring me nothing. No, indeed. Do you find yourself empty of blessedness and full of sin? Hear, O complaining people: I will fill the treasures of thy empty soul with durable goods and righteousness out of My All-sufficiency and out of the fulness which is in Christ Jesus.”

But that introduction also contains much assurance for the child of God. For when it says, “I am the Lord! I am the Jehovah!” it declares to God's people that God will never change, that their salvation lies eternally firm in the God Who declares “I am the Lord, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed.”

We also call this impressive because it expresses the relationship of God to his people.

The Lawgiver here declares, “I am thy God! I am thy possession! I am thine in life and death, in trouble and distress! I am thy God, always and forever.”

And now we ask: may we not cry out at this point, “Happy is that people, whose God is the Lord”? For notice it is that people to whom we may say, nay, to whom God Himself says, “Thou art become the people of My possession! Thou art My people by eternal election. Thou art the rod of my inheritance. Thou art become the people of My possession by purchase! For you, in your stead, I sacrificed Mine only One, in Him I made you Mine own, and I have blotted out thy guilt and sin as a thick cloud and as a morning cloud! Yea, thou art My people and I am thy God. I have called thee effectually and arrested thee in thy sinful way! I have called thee out of thy life of sin, out of thy sleep of death. I drew thee with cords of a man, with bands of love! I bound thee to Me and to My service by the Spirit of faith! I have laid upon you, as upon My people, all My promises! Yea, I am the Lord, thy God. Thou hast chosen Me as thy covenant God. After I drew thee with almighty power and bound thee to Me, thou hast also chosen Me to be thy God!”

For all whom God has truly quickened will say: "That God is my God." One expresses it as his desire, and as the issue of his heart, and another in consciousness of faith and in actual appropriation. But they all say, "That God is my God, even though I perish thereby." That people see so much in the dear Lord that they cry out, "He is worthy to receive all my love."

The introduction to the law is impressive especially for the deliverance which it calls to mind.

For the Lord says, "I have brought thee out of Egypt, out of the house of bondage."

What a reminder this is for Israel to whom these words apply in the first place, but also for each of God's children, because of the yoke broken by God.

He delivered His people from the whip of the driver; He delivered them from Pharaoh; for their sakes He slew all the first-born of the enemy; for them He made a path through the sea, so that they passed through the deep freely and safely; and He destroyed their enemies. "I did that!" says the Lord. "I am the Lord thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage."

But also God's people are here reminded of their spiritual deliverance. Oh, child of God, how He delivered you from the hard yoke and terrible bondage of the hellish Pharaoh! How graciously He broke the yoke of our sins and by regenerating grace, led us out of the house of bondage, out of the world and sin.

Yea, once again, what a reminder for Israel and for each of God's children, and that of the way in which God led them.

With Israel it was, and with all God's people it still is, a way of miracles. How sweetly He drew them! How ready they were to follow Him! And how after that He led them into the wilderness! They were brought to material and we to spiritual poverty. "We went through fire and through water: but thou broughtest us out into a wealthy place." Then the Lord provided an Elim of rest, prepared a table in the wilderness, and gave us water out of the rock Jesus Christ!

Yea, truly, it was an impressive reminder which the Lord placed above the law. It was impressive because of the purpose for which the Lord intended it.

That purpose for Israel was the Canaan of rest, the land flowing with milk and honey. And that purpose for each of God's children is none other than to lead them into the better, the heavenly Canaan, where they shall sing:

**"The lot to me that fell
Is beautiful and fair;**

**The heritage in which I dwell
Is good beyond compare.”**

What do you think, beloved, had we no reason to call the introduction to the law impressive?

Do you also not marvel at the incomprehensible goodness and wisdom of God that He, before proclaiming the ten commandments of His holy covenant law, first reminded us of His covenant love and faithfulness and of the great blessing bestowed on us and the intimate covenant relationship in which He stands to us and we to Him, since He declares that He is our God?

Do not think this is superfluous. Rather consider this introduction a balm which you will need for the soul piercing words you are to hear, and the wounds you will thereby receive, especially then, when the Lord proclaims His holy law in your soul with power.

Already the first commandment, which we now in accordance with Questions 94 and 95 will discuss, will cause us, if we may receive discovering light, to cry out, “Have mercy upon me, O God, and enter not into judgment with Thy servant: for in Thy sight shall no man living be justified.”

Come, beloved, let us notice concerning the first commandment:

- I. What it demands;
- II. What it forbids;
- III. Whither it drives us.

Let us then first hear what it demands. To that end let us listen with attention to the answer our Instructor gives to the 94th question.

That answer speaks of a soul-saving knowledge, “that I learn rightly to know the only true God.” Yea, that is a blessed knowledge. The Lord Jesus Himself says of this knowledge that it is life eternal. “And this is life eternal, that they might know Thee the only true God and Jesus Christ Whom Thou hast sent.” (John 17:3)

My hearers, God demands that we shall know Him as a God Who is strictly righteous and spotlessly holy, as a God Who will not tolerate sin and will not be mocked. “Be not deceived. God is not mocked.”

But God also demands that we shall know Him as the God so rich in mercy and so abundant in grace; a Lord, so good and kind, so eternally faithful and so unutterably beneficent, Who did not spare His only Son but delivered Him up to death, yea to the death of the cross, and that to save the world of His elect.

But then He also demands to be known as the Jehovah Who is worthy to be honored and served, Who must be served and feared for His own sake.

The answer of the Instructor to Question 94 also speaks of a confident trust. "That I trust in Him alone." God demands that we learn to depend on Him alone for body and soul, for time and eternity.

And what a blessed rest that gives to our soul, if we may give our lot and our way in His hand with holy reliance.

**"My soul, in silence wait for God
He is my help approved,
He only is my rock and tower,
And I shall not be moved."**

How worthy the Lord is to be trusted in all things and in all circumstances. The poet had experienced that so blessedly, and therefore he calls on all God's people to thus trust Him, saying,

**"On Him, ye people, evermore
Rely with confidence;
Before Him pour ye out your heart,
For God is our defense."**

Nay, people of the Lord, your God is in a covenant with you. He will not put you to shame in days of distress and of death, but He will give you His help when you need it and save you from all dangers. But then He also demands that you trust Him.

The first commandment also demands a childlike submission. "That I with humility and patience submit to Him only."

And what is sweeter than that childlike submission of which David sings,

**"With childlike trust, O Lord,
In Thee I calmly rest,
Contented as a little child
Upon its mother's breast."**

O how sweet and blessed it is to bow before the Lord, yea under God!

And what is more fitting than humility before Him Who is the Most High, our Creator and Maker, our God and King? Truly no garment is more suitable for us than the garment of humility.

And naught else does He demand. Hear what Micha says "He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?"

And is that not your choice and the heart's desire of everyone that is born of God?

A happy expectation is the fourth virtue the Lord demands of us in the first commandment. "That I expect all good things from Him only."

We must expect from Him all things necessary for the body. And from whom else could we expect it but from Him?

We must expect from Him a blessing in our business, in our labor, etc. And who can give us a blessing, who can bless our field with dew and rain, and warm our field with the sun? Is it not the benevolent Lord?

From Him we must expect the life of our spirit, the salvation of our soul and sustenance on the way to heaven. He possesses this all in large measure and He bestows it so very gladly on those who have forfeited all things, even to His rebellious children, for He gives it out of grace for Christ's sake. Therefore faith can never expect too much. "O God Jehovah, good and kind, Thou art our sun and shield forever. Thou givest glory, truth and grace."

The first commandment also demands that we love, fear and glorify Him with our whole heart. And what do you say, beloved, is the Lord not fully worthy of this? May, yea must the Lord not demand this of His creature? Who has ever loved as God Who as it were tore His only Son from His heart? Is He then not worthy to be feared and glorified?

Truly, God demands in the first commandment that in which the blessedness of His people consists.

But then He also demands that we do it so steadfastly and so seriously "that I renounce and forsake all creatures rather than commit even the least thing contrary to His will."

After we have thus briefly and concisely, heard what God demands in the first commandment, let us now hear what He forbids.

Idolatry is forbidden. "Idolatry is (see Answer 95) instead of, or besides that one true God Who has manifested Himself in His word, to contrive or have any other object in which men place their trust."

Idolatry! What a foolish sin it is! There is but one God. There can be only one Almighty and Omnipresent God. Oh, certainly many gods are spoken of, even in Scripture, but they are called gods because of their office or ministry, not because they are gods.

And what is an idol? "We know that an idol is nothing, says the Apostle, and that there is none other God but one, namely the Lord."

How did man get idols? Alas, beloved hearers, when man turned his back to God, he

lost the key of knowledge. He does not know who the true God is. Still man feels that there is a Supreme Being, and he feels that there is a God who must be served. But who is He? The most honest ones admit "I do not know." Thus we read, for example, of the altar "to the unknown God." Others began to worship all kinds of creatures. Scripture says, "God is a sun." Blind mankind said "The sun is God." While it seems that before the flood godlessness was predominant, after the flood idolatry broke out in a dreadful manner. Men devised a thousand gods. And even the people of Israel cleaved to idols. Yea, it became their principal sin, for which God punished them by exiling them to Babylon.

God forbids in the first commandment: sorcery. That is imitating God's omnipotence; that is, in fellowship with Satan men perform acts which are like miracles and at which people marvel. Take, for instance the Egyptian magicians.

God forbids: all soothsaying. That is imitating God's omniscience. But soothsayers are not omniscient and can not predict the future, They are crafty people, advanced in the skills of calculating and guessing.

God forbids: all superstition. That is the sin so common in the Roman Catholic Church, which ascribes an influence for good or for evil to crosses, relics, etc.

God also forbids all invocation of saints or any other creatures. That is forsaking the God of heaven.

All these abominable sins I must flee from and avoid, as sincerely as I desire the salvation of my soul, says the Catechism.

Let us now sing Psalter No.222 st. 5.

Finally let us ask concerning the first commandment where it drives us.

It drives us to Golgotha, to the blood of the Crucified One. Certainly we must all testify also of this commandment that it is holy and good. Nothing could be more fitting than that which is commanded and forbidden here. Yea, if the Lord would give us our choice as to keeping or discarding this commandment, we would have to say, "Lord, please keep it for our sake; we cannot spare that dear commandment which Thou didst set at the head of Thy law."

But are we not guilty in this? Have we not terribly transgressed this commandment?

My unconverted fellow-traveler to eternity, are you not, in respect to this commandment black as an Ethiopian?

The first commandment demands that we learn rightly to know the only true God, trust in Him, with childlike humility, submit to Him; love, fear, and glorify Him, and expect all good things from Him only. And how is it with you in all these matters?

But, of course, you do not know Him. The Lord is a stranger to you. And you much rather trust and expect all good things from a generous person. Do you fear Him? You are afraid of Him. You wished He were not there. You do not love Him, you hate Him. You have other gods. You commit idolatry with everything: with your sinful body by adorning it, with your wife or husband and children by esteeming them more than your soul's salvation. God wants to be the first and have the highest place, and what do you do?

You consider God last and give Him the lowest place, or you do as thousands of apostates do in our days, who do not consider God at all, who give Him no place at all, who say they have finished with God and with religion.

But be not deceived! God has not yet finished with you. That must still take place. That will happen soon. Then you will stand before Him as one who has served idols, who has cast God and His law behind your back. How then will you justify yourself? You can not answer Him one of a thousand. And then that God who engraved the first commandment in stone with His finger, shall have the last word and that will be: "Depart from Me into outer darkness."

Therefore we still call to you: Repent ye, repent ye, before it is too late. Flee with your guilt and sin to Golgotha, to Him Who can and will save idolators.

The Lord grant you thereto His grace and Spirit!

And we, children of grace, where shall we hide our guilty head, except at the cross of Calvary? For do you not also acknowledge yourself guilty of transgressing this commandment, even after having received grace?

How little do we know the one true God, Who has manifested Himself in His Word, and in principle in our heart! And do you know that our ignorance of the Lord is already a transgression of the first commandment?

And how is it with that "confident trust"? Do we not trust much more in our own strength and wisdom for time and eternity than in the Lord? Alas, on how many reeds we lean and rest!

And how is it with our childlike submission? How often we would be master and dictate to the Lord what to do and what not to do. Is it not so with you, to your bitter sorrow?

"Expect all good things from Him only." And we often expect more good from our soul from a tear and a sigh than from God's grace and rich mercy.

We must love, fear and glorify Him, but how often our love and childlike fear is as the smoking flax and the bruised reed!

Thus we could go on to enumerate a long list of sins of omission. And the sins of commission must also be added. For we would not worship idols, but we commit

idolatry with our gifts, experience and prayers, with our friends and pastors, yea with what do we not commit idolatry? Do we not also, like the foolish Galatians, allow ourselves in a spiritual sense to be bewitched? Soothsaying, how gladly we do it, although we are but of yesterday and know nothing. And how proud we are when our predictions come true, when we have guessed right. Superstition and idolizing creatures we are guilty of those sins constantly. Attend the meetings of God's people and you will often find more idolizing of the creatures and invocation of saints than praising and glorifying Christ and God.

Alas, dear children of the Lord, we are born as idolators, and therefore we constantly transgress the first commandment.

And our idolatrous existence is dishonoring to the Lord, but also causes sorrow to our soul. David says (Ps. 16 :4) "Their sorrows shall be multiplied that hasten after another god." And oh, if we love an idol whether it be man or woman, money or possessions or whatever it may be, we experience the truth of these words. We are punished with our idols, by our idols and for our idols. Child of God, our idolatrous nature cannot be changed. That old man, that idolator must die or else he causes our death.

And there is but one cure. That cure you will find at Golgotha. The blood of the Crucified One, that precious, priceless divine blood of Christ is a covering for our sins, that is the comfort for our heart, that is the medicine for our ailment, that is the balm for our wounds, but it is also poison for our idolatrous existence, for our old man. But what a rich comfort it is to know that what God demands in the first commandment is also a promise for all God's people.

In that dear covenant law the dear covenant God comes to His dear covenant child, and says, "I know that you have sincerely chosen Me to be your God. I know that it is the inmost desire of your heart and soul to love, fear and glorify Me. I know you have broken with your idols, and that you loathe both your idols and your idolatrous existence." I heard you say, "Get thee hence, what have I to do with idols any more?" I know that you pray and plead against it, and strive and wrestle with it, but that you cannot rid yourself of it. Now hearken diligently unto Me: I am the Lord, thy God. I have brought thee out of the house of bondage. Thou shalt have no other gods before Me. I, thy God, shall bring that to pass. I shall cause thee rightly to know Me, the only true God and to love, honor and glorify Me always, and never to worship other gods any more. I, thy God, shall do it.

Well, people of God, what a precious, comforting promise this is! Oh, when the Lord whispers it to us personally, and we may believe Him on His word, then our heart melts, and we yield ourselves to Him and we solemnly promise that if the Lord will thus take care of it, then He alone and always shall be our God, Whom we shall love, fear and glorify.

What a lovable Lord our God is! Must we not love such a God with all our heart? How easy is His yoke and how light is His burden!

You will understand that on this side of the grave, we shall not attain such heights. But it shall be so hereafter. Wherefore comfort one another with these words.

AMEN

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