

## **A God-Glorifying Life**

(Exodus 20: 1-11)

I The 10 Commandments teach us about our duties to God, and to men. (The first four teach us how to honor God, and the last six show us our duties toward our neighbor. Last week we showed how most people cannot get very far past the First Commandment without getting into trouble either with God or with government. This is because Satan uses governments and their agencies to obstruct and oppose us who would have pure faith in Christ and live in obedience to the Commands of God. So believers have to decide whether to give their moral allegiance to government (by keeping its laws) or to God (and risk legal problems by denying government the authority to set aside godliness in favor of moral relativism). And just in case you missed the point last week, a lot of people who claim to be believers who have not accomplished much spiritual growth yet. The human characteristics of un-regenerated humanity (specifically, the propensity to commit sin), rather than the Holy Spirit of God, determines their words and actions. Such people attend churches everywhere, and they are a reproach, in that they profane the name of God, who called us out of worldliness to reveal His Glory in us.)

A Idolatry means to put our trust in any object other than God. (We have seen how sacrificing one's children to secular humanism on the altars we call public schools (again, to comply with compulsory school attendance laws) is not much different than sacrificing them to Molech by fire, or to some other pagan god by some other means. The only way that the children will learn to honor God with their lives is if parents teach them to do so; and the public schools (and other pagan gods) have different agendas. We also saw how otherwise sincere believers can profane the Name of God, thinking that they are offering spiritual prayers in the name of Jesus when they are not. The proper topic of prayers is conformity to the image of Christ. If we sincerely desire to reach that conformity then there are

a lot of temporal and secular things that we need to repent. Repentance requires a conscious act of the will. If you think that the devil cannot interfere with *prayers in tongues* then you are mistaken: he already interfered, by making people think they are talking to God when in fact they are only talking to one another, and the only thing they are saying is, “Well listen to me, I can do this too!” We must be in possession of our intellectual processes in order to surrender them to Jesus in repentance. Jesus told us about the role (or, ministry) of the Holy Spirit: to be the Comforter, Who *will teach you all things and call to your remembrance all things whatsoever I have said unto you* (John 14:26). Ephesians 1:13 says He *seals us up in our salvation*. He helps us pray *with groanings that cannot be uttered* (Romans 8:26). Now we will not take time to refute charismatic dogma in this message; but we will point out that if we are going to remember things that Jesus said, we need to be using our minds to think with; and if the Holy Spirit is making the *groaning that cannot be uttered*, then do you utter groanings? And the point of the praying is to become more like Jesus, by the changes the Holy Spirit makes in our character, not to become more like the people around you who are also praying in tongues, without becoming any more holy as a result of their prayers. The point is that far too many church people have substituted erroneous church dogmas about the work of the Holy Spirit for sound scriptural doctrine, and that substitution has become another form of idolatry in Protestant Churches.)

B Commandments 2, 3, and 4 show us how to glorify God as we live. (To be sure, the First Commandment describes a specific point of view, which we must have if we are to honor God properly. Commandments number 2, 3, and 4 tell us three specific ways that God wants us to honor Him. We should not think that these three are the only ways; there are others. These three are the *foundation*

upon which we build a life of faithfulness to God. In other words, we will never glorify God in any other area of life until we learn to obey the first Four Commandments.)

II The Second Commandment forbids religious images. (Most true believers don't have any problem distinguishing God from a statue. This Commandment forbids the religious practices of Buddhists, hindus, Roman Catholics, and a variety of other heathen and pagan religions. True believers in Jesus understand that *God is a Spirit and they that worship God must worship Him in spirit and in truth, for the Father seeketh such to worship Him* (John 4:24).

A We must not represent God by images. (God, Who is Spirit, has no physical form or shape. Furthermore, God is infinite. If we try to represent an infinite God by a finite shape, then we necessarily diminish the majesty of His Glory. Some would object that an image (of Jesus on the Cross, or Mary holding the Baby Jesus, or Jesus blessing the children) is an aid to our faith. We hold that a mnemonic device is not the same as an aid to faith. First, many things can be mnemonic devices, and we have the most important one of all in the Words of the Scriptures. Second, we should recall that faith is a gift from God. Therefore the Faith that saves us from sin cannot be aided by anything we might say, or do, or make. Either God gives us this faith as a gift, or He does not and we only pretend to have it. Now many who do not have true faith pretend to practice it anyway, so how can we think of their actions? They are only practicing the principle of positive profession, in other words, a logic error called "affirming an antecedent". In no case can we arrive at faith by deductive reasoning, or conjure it by magic words, or remember it with some mnemonic device. Thus the images we might otherwise allow prove to be useless, and possibly even impediments, to true faith. And there is yet another danger. Roman Catholics, Buddhists, Hindus, and Pagans actually represent the gods to whom they pray with images. As we have

shown, trusting something other than God for anything spiritual is idolatry, and forbidden by the First Commandment. Did you know that there was a time when Protestant Churches would not even use bells or put crosses on their meeting houses? They considered these things to be “popish emblems” —blasphemies against God perpetuated by the Roman Catholic church; but since those early days of the Protestant Reformation, we have come a long way towards humanism.)

B Images of creatures cannot be used either to worship them, or to serve God by them. (This is the point at which we *can* allow bells and crosses for Churches. They are not images of creatures, and we do not use them as objects of worship, regardless of the Roman Catholic liturgy. That is to say, in the Roman Catholic mass, the priest dings a little bell and says some magic words (he used to speak in Latin), and the Eucharist and wine are supposed to change, literally, into the Body and Blood of Jesus. Protestant Churches use bells for signals for people, not signals for God to perform the actions the priest demands. Now we cannot let the Protestants off completely either. In many churches, small children re-enact the nativity of Jesus in a “live manger scene”—that is, they have live farm animals, and some little girl sits by a box of hay holding a doll baby. They get boys (if they can find enough of them) to pretend to be Joseph and the shepherds, and sometimes they even collect a small choir to pretend to be the Christmas Angels. Such a re-enactment may be innocent enough, especially for children; but what if everything in the scene is replaced by translucent plastic mannequins with lights inside them? In that case, we have images, and using these to inspire worship for God is a clear violation of the Second Commandment. It would be so much better to use the scriptural account of the Birth of Jesus and our Christmas carols, without the actors, either the living people or the plastic images of them.)

C We must instruct believers by the lively preaching of the Scriptures. (There

are four ways by which God reveals His Glory to humanity. One is the created universe: *For since the creation of the world, God's invisible qualities—His eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made...* (Romans 1:20). Another way is by the incarnation of Jesus: *The Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His Glory* (John 1:14). A third way is by the written Word of God: *These things are written that ye may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing, ye might have life through His name* (John 20:30-31). The final way should be the most obvious, but it turns out to be the trickiest of all. We who believe are born again as children of God, and we are predestined to be conformed to His image (John 1:12 and Romans 8:29). That means Jesus, living in us as we live in Him, should reveal the Glory of God to the people we meet every day. If that doesn't happen, we are at fault for failing to glorify God with our lifestyles. We only learn how to do that by prayer and by Bible study; and if we as believers fail to challenge one another to read the Bible and pray about how it changes our lives then we may as well not have any church meetings at all. We say again, the only two legitimate reasons to have a church are to evangelize unbelievers with the Gospel, and to help each other become better Christians. The only thing we need for these things is our Bibles; images of anything else are only distractions.)

III The Third Commandment forbids profanity. (We need to be very careful about which words we allow to pass from our lips. Jesus had some things to say about this too. ... *Whatever enters the mouth goes into the stomach and then out of the body but the things that come out of the mouth come from the heart, and these make a man unclean* (Matthew 15:17-18); and *men will have to give account on the day of judgment for every careless word they have spoken. For by your words you will be acquitted, and by your words you will be condemned* (Matthew 12:36-

37). Spirits live in words, even in our words. Some of those spirits are helpful to other believers and others are not; some challenge unbelievers to repent, others merely help them excuse impenitence. We must honor God with our speech.)

A There are many ways to profane the Name of God. (The most obvious is to use bad language. Now for our purposes, we will say that “bad language” means the words for which a mother would slap her child for saying out loud. So can we imagine a gesture with the hands and fingers that is intended to express the same obscenity? So what is it that makes such perverse communications bad? It is the attitude of the person who expresses himself in that way. The gesture replaces the words when the child knows he will be punished for vocalizing his defiance. The attitude is impudent; it rebels against all authority. The thought which stirs the attitude comes from a spirit, which came from the devil. Remember that spirits live in words. The spirit which is responsible for perversity and obscenity lives in the words of rock-and-roll music and the insolent nature of juveniles. It causes thoughts as well as words. The clothing fashions and hairstyles by which teenagers seek to express their individualism come from thoughts that are caused by that same spirit. That spirit is humanism, and it rebels against all authority, God’s or anyone else’s. God called us out of worldly patterns of behavior, so that He could reveal His Glory in us; we profane His holy name by any behaviors that express insubordination, either to God or to anyone in whom God has vested His authority: i.e. parents and teachers. And adults are just as guilty if we allow it.)

B We must glorify God by all our works, including our words. (As Christ said, by our words we will be acquitted, or condemned. That is because we use words to excuse bad conduct. Jesus also said, *He that doeth truth cometh to the Light that his deeds may be manifest, that they are wrought in God* (John 3:21). We say again, if we are born again, the Spirit of God has put the life of Jesus in

our souls. If Jesus is living in us then His thoughts become our thoughts and our actions (which flow out from our thoughts) are His actions as well. (Surely, we profane the Name of God if we behave as if he were not a Christian.) The Holy Spirit will cause only holy thoughts and actions, and so the person who claims to be filled with the Holy Spirit and yet behaves as if he is filled with the humanistic spirit is a liar. The deeds of the child of God in Christ will be the same as the deeds of Jesus Himself. One *kind* of action is to vocalize our thoughts (e.g., use audible words), and if the words we utter do not express godly thoughts then we profane the Name of God by our speech, *even* if our mothers might *not* slap us for the words we utter. This is why the Bible cautions us to avoid *foolish talking and jesting, which are not convenient* (Ephesians 5:24). We can see then that there are several ways to dishonor God's holy name that do not include swearing.)

C As for swearing, we may swear only to truth in the name of God. (Jesus made it very simple for us in Matthew 5:37. He said, *Let your yes be yes and your no be no; anything beyond this comes from the evil one*. So what if the evil one creates conditions in which a court of law demands an oath of us? We might invoke the words of Jesus and refuse to swear, and thus risk punishment for obstructing "justice"; or, (without sin, we believe) we can speak as God and some Old Testament prophets spoke. To say *as surely as God lives*, or *as God is my witness* and then speak the truth, is the same as swearing an oath. If what we speak is true then we are not in any danger from God. If we swear that something is true when it isn't, we have a false oath. Not only did we tell a lie (forbidden by the 9<sup>th</sup> Commandment), we have in effect asked God to treat our lie as if it were true, which goes against the holiness of His character. It should go against our holy character too. If not, then we profane the Name of God by our false oath.)

IV The Fourth Commandment tells us to keep the Sabbath holy. (The Fourth

Commandment presents us with two important questions, which we must answer (to the satisfaction of the Holy Spirit in us) before we can even begin to try to keep the Sabbath Day holy. First, we have to decide what, exactly, keeps the Day holy and what profanes it. Second, we have to decide which day of the Seven we must keep holy. Now it does no good to say that it doesn't matter which day we choose to keep holy, because if we do anything to profane the Sabbath then it will not matter which Day we profaned instead of keeping holy, either. So we soon see that the point at which most people become guilty is the excuses we offer for profaning the Sabbath instead of keeping it holy all day long, rather than which Day we profaned, or how well we kept some small part of it holy.)

A We must cease from temporal labor and engage in only spiritual activities on the Sabbath. (The *Biblical* Sabbath began at dusk on Friday evening and ended at dusk on Saturday evening. When God said not to do any work, He did not mean that we should lie in bed all day, and abstain from any physical activity or any expenditure of any energy at all. So, where should we draw the line between “normal” physical activity (for example, carrying our Bibles to church or cooking lunch), and “working”? God was referring to our secular vocations. That means, we must stop doing the jobs by which we earn a living, for the Sabbath. Instead of “earning a living”, we should engage in only God-honoring spiritual activities. We stipulate, “God-honoring” spiritual activities because, as we have already pointed out, there are a lot of spirits that cause thoughts and actions that do not honor God. “Rest” means stop working at our secular vocation, not “play” or otherwise divert our attention with secular amusements. And our point is that this “rest” should continue for the entire Sabbath. That is to say, attending church on Sunday morning does not meet the requirement of keeping the Sabbath Day holy if our next activity is going to a game room or a theater and going out for pizza

afterwards. If we honor God only on Sunday morning (and not for very long even then) and then indulge a worldly lifestyle in the afternoon, then we have profaned the Sabbath just as surely as if we operated our businesses all week long.)

B So, what constitutes “God-honoring spiritual activities”? We should hear the Word of God preached, use the Sacraments, call upon the Name of the Lord, and contribute to relief of poor. (God normally reveals Himself to mankind in four ways, as we enumerated a few moments ago. We see God in nature, in the person of Jesus, in the lifestyle of godly men and women, and in His Written Word (our Bibles). In fact, the preaching and teaching of God’s Word is the most important way our (or any) Church has of manifesting the Glory of God during our meetings. The Holy Spirit uses the power of the Word of God to cleanse our spiritual body (the church) just like we use soap and water to cleanse our physical bodies. The only way people can stop being ungodly sinners and start being godly men and women is by receiving sound doctrine from scripture and letting verses of scriptures change the way we think and act. People might well disappoint us by *not* living up to the principles of godliness, and the only unobstructed view we can get of Jesus is in the scriptures. So the only method we have for helping one another become better Christians is the preaching and teaching of the Bible.

Another God-honoring spiritual activity is our use of the sacraments. Now there are certainly some churches that commemorate the Lord’s Supper on other days than Sunday, and there is no Biblical requirement to wait until Sunday to baptize a new believer, either; but the Lord’s Day meetings are as good a time for these activities as any, and the Sabbath is certainly an appropriate time for them if there ever was one. So we do not criticize churches that observe the sacraments on other days, any more than we criticize prayer summits and revival meetings that we conduct on other days. Yet, our Lord’s Day meetings are surely a good

time for calling upon the Name of the Lord in prayer. Then if we call upon the name of the Lord, and He begins to answer, it is surely a good thing to plan to stay as long as the Spirit of God is acting upon and within us. And mark this well: it should not surprise us if the eternal Spirit of God *refuses* to manifest Himself in a group that limits Him to 10 minutes or less between the time for singing and the time for preaching; nor should it surprise us that some institutional churches which desire to create the appearance that they are more spiritual than they really are, pretend that the Spirit of God is active among their members when in truth, the only spirit they have is the vanity of a leader's ego.

Finally, we have said on many occasions that there are just two legitimate reasons for organizing a church, and three for joining one. The role of the church is to evangelize unbelievers and to edify believers. The third reason, about joining a church, relates to pooling our resources to accomplish the first two purposes. Let us note well that homeless, hungry, lonely, and otherwise distressed people need the Gospel of Salvation by Grace through Faith in Jesus, just like wealthy and pretty people do. The Church need not be a social welfare agency, and in most cases we should not try to be; but the ministration of relief, directed to people who need it most, is one of the most productive methods of evangelism.)

C Now let us turn to the question of which day we should keep holy as our Sabbath. We begin our Eternal Sabbath during this life, on the Lord's Day. (The term, "Eternal Sabbath" refers to our sublimation into the Kingdom of God, in Heaven, upon the Second Coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. As Christians we believe that a Day is coming, in the not-so-distant future, when Time as we know it will end. Jesus will return to earth from Heaven. Everyone who has ever lived will stand before God in Judgment. The Righteous will enter Heaven, and live there forever with our Heavenly Father; the Wicked will finally be condemned

and punished, forever, in Hell. There will be only these two conditions, for all of eternity. Our Sabbath Day rest is, for the believer, a sort of introduction, or preview, of our Eternal Rest, as described in Hebrews 4:9-11: *There remains, then, a Sabbath-rest for the people of God; for anyone who enters God's rest also rests from his own works, just as God did from His. Let us, therefore, make every effort to enter that rest, so that no one will fall by following their example of disobedience.* We should not think of Heaven as a kind of holiday; holidays end and we return to work. There will certainly be plenty of *spiritual* activities to keep us busy, throughout eternity. We specify *spiritual* activity because most conceptions of Heaven are very *unspiritual*. For example, we will not sit in the shade of the Tree of Life soaking our feet in the River of Life, or fishing in it, forever. And we must add two observations here. First, our busy-ness in this world is mostly related to secular activities, even on Sundays; but in Heaven, all of our busy-ness will be God-honoring spiritual activity. It will be very easy for us then, because by then we will be completely spiritual, as God is Spirit now. So the spiritual activities will seem normal; they proceed from the characteristics of born-again children of God. Now since we are new creations in Christ, we have these characteristics already. So we may think of proper spiritual activity on the Sabbath as a sort of rehearsal for Heaven. The second observation is that on Saturday nights, there are a lot of people who mean to do well on Sunday, but by the time Sunday afternoon arrives, they forget that the Sabbath Day is 24 hours long, just like all other days. So they profane the Sabbath with worldly activities. Such people do not keep the Sabbath Day holy at all, they profane it by using part of it for activities that do not honor God. So if a person profanes the Sabbath, it really doesn't matter which day he profanes. Similarly, if a person keeps the Sabbath Day holy, then it really will not matter very much if it is Saturday or

Sunday. The Seventh-Day Adventists say that Saturday should be the Sabbath, as it was for Old Testament Jews and for Jesus and His Disciples; all other believers use Sunday as the Sabbath, because Resurrection Sunday was the First Day of the week, or we could say, the first Lord's Day. Again we say, if you keep it holy with God-honoring activities, then the Lord's Day is your Day of Rest from temporal labors, and the day we engage in God-honoring spiritual activity in a kind of rehearsal for Heaven. On the other hand, the person who profanes the holiness of the Sabbath with secular activity may as well profane one day as the other, because it will be all the same to God.)

V Humanism seeks, and finds, excuses for sins. (It usually succeeds. It succeeds because humanity has a propensity for sin, rather than for righteousness. Then we seek to relieve our sense of guilt due to the Original Sin, and for subsequential sins too, by excusing our bad behavior, on the grounds that our intentions were good and only our *efforts* at perfection were inadequate, and because we know for certain that such-and-such is wrong, and that we will try harder *next time*. We excuse ourselves like this, but we tend to hold others to a higher standard of moral conduct because making out that someone else is worse than we are make us feel morally superior. But in the absence of self-effacing confession of sin there is no real repentance, and only *godly sorrow worketh repentance* (2 Corinthians 7:10). That means that without the godly sorrow, repentance is only a game of pretend, and if there is no true repentance, there is no salvation either.)

A The 10 Commandments describe our *unrighteousness*, not our righteousness. (We have seen how only Jesus Himself could establish His own righteousness by complete obedience to the entire Law of God. We have seen as well that most people cannot even get past *Thou shalt have no other gods before me* without getting into some trouble either with God or with government. Perhaps now we

realize that we have an even greater problem. Our best efforts at obeying God will still fall short if we trust anything but God, and for His Grace only. Even faithful church members profane the Name of God by things we ordinarily do and say, both in church meetings and after them. *All have sinned and come short of the Glory of God.* Sincere believers can be just as guilty as anyone else.)

B That, however, is not the end of the story. God offers to forgive the sins we repent and forsake. (This is both the solution to our moral problem, and the point at which even Christians fail to honor God's Holy Word. Now public confession of sin, and public professions of faith, and public observances of the Sacraments are all important elements of life for the child of God, but we hasten to add that all of these can be done in the wrong spirit, too. In other words, it will do no good to act the part of a humble, penitent, contrite sinner if you are simply confessing one sin to avoid repenting of another. It will not matter to God how many people the hypocrite deceives about his piety by false testimony; what *will* matter is that the only One Who can see into our hearts and minds sees humble and contrite repentance of sin when He looks into *your* heart. On Judgment Day, we will all stand before God either as sinners who were saved by His Grace, or as sinners who were not saved by anything. The only righteousness we will show to God is that of Jesus living in us, because He is the only One who ever obeyed the Law of God completely. *By Grace ye are saved through faith, and that not of your selves, it is the gift of God, and not by works, lest any man should boast* (Ephesians 2:8-9). We cannot glorify God by any other way than this: that God saved us from sin by the life and work of Jesus Christ. To attempt reconciliation with God on any other terms is vanity. So in the name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, we beg you to be certain of that which you believe, and to trust only in Jesus for your Salvation, to the Glory of God now and forever, and Amen.)