

“ONLY ONE TRUE GOD.”

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First Christian Reformed Church

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Heidelberg Catechism: Lord’s Day 34, Q94, 95.

Scripture Texts: Exodus 20:1-3

Introduction:

Remember two weeks ago using six gold coins I said each commandment has two sides, each commandment includes prescriptions and prohibitions, things to be done and things not to be done, virtues and vices, the yes and the no. Grace is always both positive and negative. Repent and believe.

What are the two sides of the first commandment? “Not only shall you have *no* other gods before me, but you shall also *know* me as your God.” No other gods, know me as God.

We do not *have* God as God until we know Him. We cannot have God as our God until we know Jesus Christ as our Savior and Lord, for no one can come to the Father except through the perfect obedience, perfect righteousness, shed blood of Jesus. On the cross Jesus defeated and destroyed all gods and all idols. To know God and to know Jesus is to turn from all idols.

Know God.

God has made Himself known in creation/nature, in Scripture and in His Son. He is an inescapable reality. We are created to know Him. We are without excuse.

Romans 1:19-20 What can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. 20 For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse.

Hebrews 1:1-3 Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, 2 but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world. 3 He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature.

John 17:3 This is eternal life, that they know you the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.

This is our prayer from Colossians 1, to grow in the knowledge of God and His will.

I have heard when they are training the Royal Canadian Mounted Police to recognize counterfeit money, they don't show them counterfeit money. They make them study the real thing until they know it so well that any counterfeit is easy to spot.

That sounds like a good philosophy for knowing the one true God.

Knowledge comes through study and effort, through applying ourselves to search, seek and know. To know God means to be motivated, moved, stirred up to know God. It means it is on my daily To Do List, it's a priority, a clear determination, a desire that I will get to know God.

To know God is to fight against laziness, slothfulness, negligence, and inattentiveness. Are we satisfied with our present knowledge of God? Consider that the apostle Paul wasn't:

Philippians 3:12-15 Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own. 13 Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, 14 I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. 15 Let those of us who are mature think this way,

The desire to know God means also that we follow paths that lead to true knowledge of God and His will, and that we will shun all paths that endanger our true knowledge of God.

The Heidelberg Catechism we read defines both paths.

The path to be avoided is magic, sorcery, Ouija boards, astrology, horoscopes, fortune cookies, signs, superstition, mantras, praying to Mary or to saints, etc. Any seeking to know God or His mind or will through other means than those given by God to know Him will lead you away from knowing God.

In the catechism we also have a summary list for the path to knowing God. To know God means to worship Him, to have faith and hope in Him, to love Him and fear Him, to humble ourselves before Him, and patiently expect only good things to come from Him.

I Chronicles 28:9 "Solomon my son, *know* the God of your father *and* serve him with a whole heart and with a willing mind, for the Lord searches all hearts and understands every plan and thought. If you seek him, he will be found by you, but if you forsake him, he will cast you off forever.

The path to true knowledge of God is found in seven things being embraced in our hearts, minds and wills. Seven exercises or fruitful ways to increase in the knowledge of God.

Worship and glorify God as God.

What we worship is our God. What we adore, what we bow down to, what we desire most and love most is our God. To truly know the true God is to worship Him.

Worship is the one particular honor that belongs only to what is divine. We can love, honor, respect, trust and have faith in other people or things, but worship is exclusively due only to God and none other. We are commanded to worship the only one who is worthy of worship.

God is a jealous God and will share His glory with no other and will have no other creature rob Him of that is only due to Him.

Isaiah 42:8 I am the Lord; that is my name; my glory I give to no other, nor my praise to carved idols.

God desires and wills and commands that He be pre-eminent among His people, that He have no rivals. We are to give or transfer to no other what only belongs to Him.

Just as all your love and attention to your wife will fall flat if you are sharing it with a mistress, so all your worship and honor and esteem become nothing if at the same time your loyalty and affection is divided with another. Idolatry is adultery. True worship is faithfulness to one God.

This virtue stands against false worship (idolatry) and against no worship (atheism).

Faith in God.

True and fruitful knowledge of God leads to faith in God.

We make God God when we put our faith and trust in Him, when He is the ground of our confidence, when we make Him our firm foundation.

This virtue stands against unbelief, doubt, distrust.

To know God and put our faith in Him is to resist the practical atheism that characterizes our culture and much of the church.

God is truly God to us and truly reigning on the throne of our hearts when we entrust to Him the most precious treasure we have, our eternal souls.

And one clear proof of our faith will be when we trust Him at all times, both in good times and in bad times. When we are flourishing and when we are floundering. When He lifts us up and when He brings us down. Even when all our earthly crutches are pulled out from under us. When we have no drink but tears.

Psalm 62:8 Trust in him at all times, O people; pour out your heart before him; God is a refuge for us.

Hope in God.

I said true and fruitful knowledge of God leads to faith in God. Hope in God springs from faith. Faith is confidence in God now, and hope extends that confidence into the future.

Hope is spiritual security, confidence in the grace and mercy of God.

This virtue stands against despair, hopelessness, pessimism, and doubt of the future goodness of God.

Love of God.

Love is that knowledge of God that fills our hearts with the assurance of His infinite goodness that He can and will do only good to us and for us.

This virtue stands opposed to hatred of God and excessive love of self or things.

Deuteronomy 6:5 You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.

Love for God includes actually saying those very words to God, “I love you, Lord.”

I have talked to many people in the generation or two older than me on many occasions about how the parents in those generations did not always say those words to each other or to their children. Those words don’t flow as easily from the lips of some of the older generations.

Part of loving is saying, “I love you.” We all know how powerful those words are.

This morning we sang for the Call to Worship, “I Love You, Lord.” I remember decades ago hearing that song and singing it for the first time and how the words moved from my mind to my heart, when I said “I love you, Lord” with real affection and feeling.

I went from loving God with my mind and my will, to loving Him with all my heart. Loving God is the greatest thing we can do and saying it to Him is one of the greatest things we can say to Him.

Psalm 63:1 O God, you are my God; earnestly I seek you; my soul thirsts for you; my flesh faints for you, as in a dry and weary land where there is no water.
3 Because your steadfast love is better than life, my lips will praise you. ...

Fear of God.

Proverbs 1:7 The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge.

Knowledge, wisdom and fear of God are joined together in Scripture.

Among godly and mature followers of God, love and fear are always together. They embrace each other, and are not to be separated nor viewed as contradictory.

The fear of God is the knowledge of God concerning His righteousness, justice, holiness, purity, and wrath toward sin.

This fear is an awareness God always sees us and knows every thought and every inclination of our hearts.

With this is a comparable hatred of sin and of all offenses against God. We would sooner suffer the loss of everything else than to offend God. Wicked people sin without thought of fear of God. Godly people fear God and fear sin, which leads them to flee sin, and when they sin to repent quickly and turn back to God.

For the godly, the fear of the Lord means running toward God rather than away from God. It is the fear of a son to a father, not a slave to a master. The fear of God makes God truly God to us.

And the fear of God drowns out the fear of man. The fear of man and of man's opinions is very strong among us. We care far too much about appearances and being thought well of and of being liked. We care too much what others think and take too heart too quickly offenses and injuries.

Remember the three men in Daniel who were thrown into the furnace, feared God more than they feared man or what man could do. The fear of God will diminish and destroy the fear of man.

To know God also means to stand against any contempt for God. Contempt for God means you have knowledge of Him and about Him but it means nothing to you, it leaves you cold, not moved to love Him or desire Him or obey Him.

Romans 1:21 For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened.

Humility toward God.

Humility is that knowledge of God which knows all good in us and all good done by us is not of our own doing, but entirely of God.

Humility freely acknowledges we are poor, weak, foolish and ignorant. Apart from Him we are nothing and we have nothing.

This virtue opposes pride and arrogance and self-promotion. Pride is confidence in ones own ability, knowledge, or gifts.

Micah 6:8 He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?

Patience toward God.

Patience is that knowledge of God's wisdom, providence, justice and goodness. Patience is knowing God is a strong and wise father who disciplines and guides as He knows best for us.

This is simply submitting to the will of God and waiting on Him with obedience.

This virtue stands opposed to impatience, thoughtlessness, rashness, anger. Patience doesn't murmur, grumble or complain on account of suffering, hardship.

Patience fruitfully helps us let God be God when we don't understand what is going on.

Patience is that virtue that enables us to maintain our faith, hope and love in the dark seasons.

Implications and application.

Everything is ours in Christ. We need no other.

Matthew 11:27 All things have been handed over to me by my Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.

John 6:66 After this many of his disciples turned back and no longer walked with him. **67** So Jesus said to the Twelve, "Do you want to go away as well?" **68** Simon Peter answered him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life, **69** and we have believed, and have come *to know*, that you are the Holy One of God."

Jesus is the center of our life, our faith, our forgiveness, our salvation and our eternal life. Where else would we look? Why would we look elsewhere?

This is a call to faith, to total trust in God and in God alone. Look to nothing else and no one else for your needs. He is our rock and our foundation, we look to no other support.

Give yourself, body, soul and spirit to your creator, the one true God as a living sacrifice.

Prayer: Holy Father, we have tasted your goodness but are ashamed at our lack of desire for more of you. Make us thirsty for more of you. Fill us with a holy longing. Grant us a glimpse of your glory and then make us want to see more. We have wandered in the lowlands long enough; make us desire the heights you have created us for. Give us grace to ask and seek and knock, to press further up and further in for your glory and our greater joy and peace, in the name of Jesus.