

JULY 27th
WHERE'S YOUR ALLEGIANCE LIE?

“You shall have no other gods before me.” Exodus 20:3

The Reformation happened over 500 years ago, but we find ourselves continuing the fight to reform. But here's the catch, the battle isn't outside of us, it's within us! One warrior during the Reformation was John Calvin. Calvin famously wrote in his Institutes of Christian Religion: "Man's nature, so to speak, is a perpetual factory of idols." Here's the problem though, we struggle to see it. Tim Keller may be helpful at this point from his book "Counterfeit Gods": "We think that idols are bad things, but that is almost never the case.... Anything can serve as a counterfeit god, especially the very best things in life...a counterfeit god is anything so central and essential to your life that, should you lose it, your life would feel hardly worth living." As we see the problem in our hearts, how can God help us in this war against our idol addicted hearts?

"You shall have no other gods before me." It can also be translated, "You shall have no other gods besides me." Sounds simple enough and direct. So, if that's true what makes it so hard for us as men to follow this command? As I already discussed, we have a problem in our hearts. It's a problem that began in the Garden of Eden. Eve is described as looking at the fruit and Moses gives us an insider view of what she was thinking, "So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate..." If Eve (and Adam) were wise, why would they need God? They become gods themselves if they are fully wise like God. That was the whole point of Satan's temptation: "You will not surely die, because God knows that the day that you eat of it, you will become like God...". Hughes makes a point in his book "Disciplines of Grace": "There are only two categories of people: true worshipers or true idolaters, for all have a god." Nothing is to be placed above God. Anytime someone or something is elevated to a position that only God designed, we have drifted into idolatry. It's sometimes subtle and sometimes obvious, but the result is the same. We have substituted something for God's rightful place, but that's only the negative side of the story. What about the positive side?

As you examine Genesis 3, you'll see that Adam and Eve doubt the goodness of God. God's relationship with them is not enough. They are looking for something outside of God's perfect gift of Himself. Here lies the importance of this first commandment. It's not just prohibiting putting in a replacement for God, it's also a "positive grace" as Kent Hughes describes it. God is saying to His people, "You shall have me." What a gift! What a treasure! To have God as our Father, to have Him adopt us as His sons! To be able to cry out to Him boldly. To have our God "bend His ear to us" when we pray! Without finding our God, we are restless and insecure. We seek for the "replacements". It's a problem that we've had ever since Eden. Augustine wrote in his Confessions, "You have made us for Yourself, O Lord, and our heart is restless until it finds its rest in You." God is our portion, and He is all we need. We must work at daily to see God for who He is. Otherwise, as C.S. Lewis described it in the "Weight of Glory", "We are people that are making mud pies in a small dirt pond while a vacation by the ocean is next door. It's not that our desires are too strong, but that they are too weak. We are far too easily pleased." We settle for less because we've missed our God. How have you missed God lately?

Spend some time thinking about what gods you are tempted to worship. Ask God to help you find your treasure in Him alone this week.

For Further Reading: Psalm 16

