

UNDIVIDED ALLEGIANCE - FULL

Part 2 of LOVE GOD, Exodus 20:3.

Peter Foxwell. The Cornerstone Church. October 24, 2021.

INTRODUCTION: A CRUMBLING FOUNDATION

Do you remember the news back in June that a condo had collapsed in Surfside, Florida, near Miami? People lost their homes and, even more tragically, their lives and their loved ones.

Did you know that the disaster was avoidable? Here's what I read in one newspaper:

Three years before the deadly collapse of the Champlain Towers South condominium complex near Miami, a consultant found alarming evidence of “major structural damage” to the concrete slab below the pool deck and “abundant” cracking and crumbling of the columns, beams and walls of the parking garage under the 13-story building.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2021/06/26/us/miami-building-collapse-investigation.html>

The condo association didn't ignore the report, they just didn't act with any urgency. They didn't move anyone out of the building. They didn't expedite repairs. They slowly developed plans and THREE YEARS after they received the report, they were just about ready to begin the work. Then, in the middle of the night, disaster struck.

When the foundation gives way, you've got a big problem.

It doesn't matter if it's a building or a nation or an individual. We can't build a life, a culture, or a business on a crumbling or unstable foundation. Sooner or later, everything falls apart.

If you want to have a fulfilled life, you must build on a firm foundation.

Today, we return to God's Ten Commandments. As we examine the meaning of the first commandment, we will find the firm foundation on which to build our lives.

I'll explain what I mean in a moment, but first, let's read the Ten Commandments again. Please turn to **Exodus 20**.

The first commandment reads, "**You shall have no other gods before me**" (Exodus 20:3). Here, in these few words, is an invitation to build our lives on a firm foundation.

This is how we begin to build the life God wants for us. It's a way of wisdom that avoids the pitfalls and futility of a godless or self-centered life.

As we study the first commandment, let's ask and answer two questions: 1) what is the problem, and 2) what is the solution?

WHAT IS THE PROBLEM?

THE PROBLEM OF POLYTHEISM

The first commandment is aimed at polytheism. It tells us that there are many gods - lower case g - in the world. The Hebrew word for gods is ELOHIM. In the Old Testament, it is used of the true God who is the eternal, uncreated, creator of all things (Genesis 1:1; Exodus 20:1-2). But, listen to this: that word elohim is also used of supernatural, spirit beings, including angels and demons (Psalm 82:1, 6; 1 Kings 11:33; Deuteronomy 32:17). Behind every little g god, there is an invisible demonic spirit enslaving its followers.

After 400 years in Egypt, God's people were steeped in polytheism. The Egyptian pantheon included gods of water, land, sky, sun, fertility, birth, crops, and livestock. Every part of life was dominated by false gods who kept their worshipers in bondage.

God did not set his people free from slavery to Egypt so that they could continue as slaves to false gods. He wanted them to have undivided allegiance to him because he is the true source of life and blessing. Jesus explained the problem of divided loyalties:

(Matthew 6:24) "No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money."

Jesus tells that we cannot serve a false god and expect a full life. Our small g god could be money, but it could also be any number of other things - power, comfort, Amazon, Instagram likes, friendships. These false gods promise so much, but cannot deliver.

WHY ADDRESS THIS PROBLEM?

Why did God address the problem of polytheism and why did he make it the first item on his agenda? The simple answer is: for our good and for his glory.

Whomever or whatever we worship will be the foundation on which we build our lives. If we give our allegiance to the godlets, we'll get hurt because our foundation will be lies, false hopes, and empty promises. Godlets can't help us. Isaiah pointed this out:

(Isaiah 46:5-7) “To whom will you liken me and make me equal, and compare me, that we may be alike? 6 Those who lavish gold from the purse, and weigh out silver in the scales, hire a goldsmith, and he makes it into a god; then they fall down and worship! 7 They lift it to their shoulders, they carry it, they set it in its place, and it stands there; it cannot move from its place. If one cries to it, it does not answer or save him from his trouble.

Serving the godlets is like building on a foundation of deaf, dumb, powerless, man-made ideas that will eventually collapse, leaving us empty or dead.

Worse, when we give our allegiance to many gods, we rob the one true God of the worship he rightly deserves. We owe everything to him. How long can a person or a nation ignore God without repercussions?

(Deuteronomy 8:19) And if you forget the LORD your God and go after other gods and serve them and worship them, I solemnly warn you today that you shall surely perish.

Polytheists perish; that is, they miss out on blessings that the true God gives to his people; such things as his love, care, wisdom, hope and joy. They live a half life, a shadow existence, always craving and never satisfied.

The apostle Paul wrote that polytheism leads to social disintegration - Romans 1:18-32. Was he correct? Let me read the passage and you tell me if anything sounds familiar:

(Romans 1:21-32) 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. 22 Claiming to be wise, they became fools, 23 and exchanged the

glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things.

24 Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves, 25 because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen.

26 For this reason God gave them up to dishonorable passions. For their women exchanged natural relations for those that are contrary to nature; 27 and the men likewise gave up natural relations with women and were consumed with passion for one another, men committing shameless acts with men and receiving in themselves the due penalty for their error.

28 And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a debased mind to do what ought not to be done. 29 They were filled with all manner of unrighteousness, evil, covetousness, malice. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, maliciousness. They are gossips, 30 slanderers, haters of God, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, 31 foolish, faithless, heartless, ruthless. 32 Though they know God's righteous decree that those who practice such things deserve to die, they not only do them but give approval to those who practice them.

Polytheism is a shaky, crumbling foundation on which to build a life or a culture.

After Israel finally crossed the River Jordan and entered the promised land, General Joshua, who led them into the land, warned the people not to revert to polytheism:

(Joshua 24:4-6) “Now therefore fear the Lord and serve him in sincerity and in faithfulness. Put away the gods that your fathers served beyond the River and in Egypt, and serve the Lord. 15 And if it is evil in your eyes to serve the Lord, choose this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your fathers served in the region beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you dwell. But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.”

Ok. Polytheism is the problem. What's the solution?

WHAT'S THE SOLUTION?

ONE TRUE GOD

The first commandment teaches us that there is only one true God. The little phrase, "before me," is the clue. It doesn't mean we can worship lots of gods so long as the Lord is the boss God. No, the Hebrew language scholars tell us that "before me" means that there are no other capital G Gods. The Lord is one of a kind or unique.

Who spoke the words of the first commandment? The one speaking is the LORD (verse 2), who is I AM (Exodus 3:14-15), eternal, uncreated, self-sufficient and UNIQUE. He is the creator of heaven and earth (Psalm 146:5-6). Other passages explain the concept:

(Isaiah 45:5a) I am the Lord, and there is no other, besides me there is no God ...

(Deuteronomy 6:4) "Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one." He is one in the sense that he is only true God.

(John 17:3) "And this is eternal life, that they know you the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent."

The solution to polytheism is not monotheism. It's possible to be a monotheist who sincerely worships a single false god. The solution is to know and love the one true God.

THE ONLY FIRM FOUNDATION

The solution to the crumbling foundation of polytheism is to build our lives on THE ONLY FIRM FOUNDATION, the rock who is the Lord God, the one true God.

This makes sense. The one true God is our creator. He sustains our lives. He provides for us. He loves us. He speaks the truth to us. He wants the best for us. He will never lie to us, or abuse us, or fail us. He keeps all of his promises. He has "redeemed us by giving Himself to be crucified for us in the God-man, Jesus" (Luther's Small Catechism with Explanation, Concordia, 2017, p. 58).

WHAT ARE THE CONCLUSIONS?

The first commandment is a call to action. Here's how to follow God's command:

1. REACH OUT TO JESUS. The one true God has come to us in Jesus Christ. He is God in human form, the Word made flesh. He and the Father are one. We're often told that there are many ways to God, but Jesus does not agree. He said:

(John 14:6) "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.

Kevin DeYoung writes, "If you don't know God in Christ, you don't know God."

Undivided allegiance to Jesus is the only firm foundation on which to build your life. He alone is our link to the one true God, our Father in heaven who provides for us, and protects us, and loves us, and keeps us through every twist and turn of life.

(1 Timothy 2:5-6) For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all

Jesus frees us from the godlets and forgives our wandering hearts. As we trust him, we receive every blessing God wants for us (Ephesians 1). It's in Jesus that we find true security, true joy, and true hope.

Reach out to him now with an undivided, unwavering, heart of love and worship. He is the one true God and he is the only firm foundation on which to build your life.

2. RECOGNIZE POLYTHEISM. Polytheism is real, dangerous, and sneaky even for those who profess faith in Jesus, it's possible to be lured away and deceived into serving the many "godlets" in our cultural pantheon. The Catechism names them:

Q 272: How are you tempted to worship other gods?

A: I am tempted to trust in myself, my pleasures, my possessions, my relationships, and my success, wrongly believing that they will bring me happiness, security, and meaning. I am also tempted to believe superstitions and false religious claims, and to reject God's call to worship him alone (1 Kings 11:1-8; Psalm 73:1-17; Matthew 26:14-16; 27:1-5; Romans 1:18-32) (To Be A Christian: An Anglican Catechism).

What false god lures you away? Where do you go for wisdom? What are you trusting for safety or happiness or food? What do you crave when life is hard? The name of the biggest, baddest false god is SELF, my self, your self.

Whatever you love and trust instead of or in addition to the one true God is a false god, usually made in our own image, so as to satisfy our self-centered desires. Pastor Kevin DeYoung wrote that idolatry is a religious system made by us, for us.

So, be on the look-out and recognize polytheism in your life. Then ...

3. REJECT POLYTHEISM. There's only one way to deal with the false gods who lure us away from the one true God and that is to kill them dead. That's dramatic language, but that's what the apostle Paul wrote:

(Colossians 3:5) Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry.

"Put to death" means to absolutely reject and renounce every false godlet. Refuse to love, worship, or obey anything that steals your heart from the one true God.

Remember polytheism steals glory from God and it does you no good. The counterfeit gods will hurt you as they over-promise and under-deliver. That's a shaky foundation for your life. Reject it.

Follow Jesus. That's how you build your life on a firm foundation.

WORSHIP CELEBRATION

Sunday, October 24, 2021

Welcome - invocation - Peter

Prayer - Eve

Doxology-Julia [Worship Together in D: ladies]

Open Up The Heavens - Alex [Default Arrangement in A]

Pray & Dismiss children - Peter

Bible Reading- Peter

Exodus chp 5

Sing His Praise Again - Eve [Default Arrangement in C: Eve]

Adoration . Prayer- Peter

Teaching- Peter

communion-Tami

Lord's Prayer
confession

Living Water- Eve [Ellie Holcomb in B: original]

Updates- Peter & Joey

Blessing- Peter
