

Exod 04-01-04b

Let's resume our study this morning in Exodus chapter 20 looking at the Ten Commandments and we're going to finish the Ten Commandments and I just want to finish by saying the categorization that we have looked at this morning in the commandments is really what applies to us. It's easy to look and say well I don't murder, I don't steal, I don't commit adultery, I don't bear false witness against my neighbor, so I'm good to go. But really what's most helpful for us when we think of the Ten Commandments is to think of the areas of life that they address.

When you look at the first one, have no other gods before me, is God at the top of our priority list, of our list of goals, of our list of values? Do we really approach each day from the standpoint this is the day that God has made, I need to rejoice and be glad in it, I also need to live it so that when I get to the end of it and look back and as I go through it, keeping in mind that God has given me this time, these 86,400 seconds to serve Him, to please Him, I belong to Him, I've been purchased with His Son's precious blood and I have a duty as well as an opportunity and that is the first commandment. What is spiritual life good for anyway? If we do not have a connection to the true God, the creator of the universe, so number one, religion. Number two, worship.

What is worship? A lot of people are in big buildings with special music and stained-glass windows and all and that is their idea of worship. What does Romans chapter 12 tell us about worship? Paul says, I beseech you therefore brethren by the mercies of God that you present yourselves as a sacrifice. Well, this doesn't sound as nearly strange to us as it did to the Israelites who are used to the temple and the sacrificial system down there.

You bring an animal down for the different feasts and for the different sacrifices. Paul says, you know what, I want you to take yourself and make a sacrifice. Present your body a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God.

This is your reasonable service. And the word for service there is *Latreon* or *Latreia* which comes from *Latreo* and *Latreo* is the verb in Greek that means to worship. This is your reasonable worship.

This is the way to reverence God. This is the way to respect and honor Him. If you want to worship God, don't play holy music and have an experience.

Present your body as a sacrifice. How do you do that? Well, he goes on to explain what does it mean. Do I just grab myself by the hair and say okay here I am? How do we do that? Verse 2 of chapter 12 says, do not be conformed to this world.

Anybody can conform. I think it is the most knee-slapping thing and I thought this ever since I was a teenager myself. You have to look at teenagers and they say I'm James Dean.

I'm a rebel without a cause. I'm going to be different and unique. And so in the fifties they wore

a t-shirt, rolled their cigarettes up in their sleeve and had blue jeans with the cuffs rolled up and this was to rebel and to be a non-conformist.

I'm not going to dress the way my parents did. I'm going to dress this way. But then every other teenager dresses the very same way with a duck tail and their interchangeable parts.

They all look exactly the same and in every generation of teenagers since then, people say I'm going to bust out. I'm going to be independent. I'm going to be all by myself.

And then they look around to see what everybody else is doing and they do that very same thing. So instead of conforming to your parents, you conform to your peers. But hey, I'm a rebel and I'm cool and this is the way to stand out.

Romans 12 says don't be conformed to the world. You don't have to conform to your parents' generation and you don't have to conform to your own generation. Conform to the Word of God and do whatever you want to do.

Do not be conformed to this world. Be transformed by the renewing of your mind. If you really want to stand out, if you really want to be an individual, if you really want to be different, try living God's plan.

Then you'll be in a group of very few. Then you'll be walking the narrow road with very few at your side. If you really want to be different, if you really want to be an individual and if you really want to stand out, then try not conforming to the world and have your mind transformed by God's Word.

That will put you in very rarefied company. Be transformed by the renewing of your mind so that a lot of people get their mind changed. I'm still thinking about old Madonna going through the Kabbalah.

She's in a Jewish mystical thing. My dad asked me a question that I had to look up the answer to when he was saying, well, what exactly is all of this Talmud and Mishnah and all of that? And I'd been a long time since I'd thought about it. And so I went and looked it up.

And beginning about four or five hundred years before Christ, there was a commentary that began to build up around this law that we're studying. And the Jewish scribes and teachers were going and trying to expand and flesh out and answer questions about the Word of God. And it was all oral.

So you would go in and read the commandment and then they would say, well, what this really means is and then they would give a little spiel. Well, they didn't have any way to write it down. So people would memorize these spiels.

Well, as this oral law, as this commentary and interpretation grew, it became so big that nobody could really remember all of it. And so they started to write it down. And this was the

Talmud.

This is the commentary, the oral part of the law. Well, a subset of the Torah is the Mishnah and the Mishnah comments and expands on the Talmud. And then you have Gemara that expands on the Mishnah, which expands on the Talmud, which expands on the law.

And so this became like three times removed. And it's kind of what has happened in our modern theological world. The subject came up of whether I should have ever thought about going back to school and getting a doctorate.

And, you know, this is handy to have if you're going to teach in a seminary or a Bible college or if you want to be able to put doctor in front of your name or whatever. But my philosophical difficulty with school in general and going back to school in particular is that now when you have to write papers, it is not accepted to go in and take a passage of scripture or take a book of scripture. If I was going to do something, I would probably do a dissertation on Ecclesiastes and formally present what I think is going on in that book.

The problem is you can't satisfy anybody by going to the Word of God and then commenting on it. You have to interact with everyone who has commented on. And so if you're going to talk about Ecclesiastes, you have to go get every commentary and every journal article that's ever been written about Ecclesiastes and interact with them and either support or crucify their ideas.

And this guy said, you know, Bultman said something back in 1914 and then this guy talked about Bultman. And so you have to talk about the guy who talked about Bultman, who talked about somebody else. And all you're doing, it's Gamara, it's Mishnah, it's Talmud, it's all of the secondary and tertiary comments and ideas.

And whatever happened to just going to a passage of scripture? Well, that's now only in the province of pastors. A pastor can stand up and go to the text and say what he wants to say. But if you go into academia, you have to talk about what everybody else said.

And that in a nutshell is seminary life. So I wouldn't discourage anyone from going to seminary or going to Bible college, but I will tell you ahead of time you want to focus on getting the tools. Learn the languages, learn principles of hermeneutics, learn what the good standard reference materials are, your lexicons, and get the resources and the tools.

But if you want to go very far in the academic world, you're going to have to end up playing this game where you write a paper and you say, well, here is this scripture and here's that scripture and here's a third scripture. And when you look at those together, here's what the Word of God is saying. And you get red marks on your paper saying, well, where did you get this? With whom did you interact? Whose commentary did you read to get this idea? You say, well, I didn't read anybody's commentary.

Well, you can't do that. You have to interact with the literature and you get marked down. Anyway, this is our transformation.

Transformation does not take place by listening to somebody who's talking about somebody who's talking about somebody who's talking about the Word of God. Transformation comes from the raw, unadulterated truth of God's Word as it comes into our souls. If you do not want to be conformed to the world, the world is much more comfortable talking about each other and, well, this guy.

And see, then you have to get into all of the principles of logic and of inductive reasoning and deductive reasoning and logical fallacies. And we're going to, in the future, talk just a little bit about logical fallacies because they are so commonplace and so prevalent and people don't realize that what is being presented is fallacious. It's a fallacy.

You cannot make that conclusion from those premises. And we need to educate ourselves so that we can weed out truth from error because the truth of God's Word is what transforms our minds so that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God. Actually, it says, so that you can prove what is the will of God, the good, the acceptable, the complete.

That's how it is in Greek. Dokimazo means to judge, to test something for the purpose of approving. You look at it and say, is this, you know, when someone handed a guy a coin back in the old days, 150 years ago, they'd hand a guy a coin, he would bite it because it was a gold coin and it was soft enough.

If it was real gold, when you bit it, you could see your teeth marks in it. That meant it was real, the real thing. Well, he's testing it because he wants to be sure it's gold.

He wants to be sure it's the real thing. He's not testing it to eliminate it. It's not like, well, most coins are counterfeit.

So I'm going to test if this is counterfeit. He's testing because most coins are good and he wants to make sure this one is as well. Dokimazo means I'm testing this because I think it's good and I want to make sure.

Testing for the purpose of approval. So have your mind transformed so that you can verify the will of God. Everybody says, well, what's God's will in this situation? What's God's will in my circumstance? Should I talk to this person or not talk? Should I take this course of action or not take it? Should I proceed or not proceed? Well, how do you know? If you want to approve, if you want to verify what is the will of God, this tells you, have your mind transformed so that you can approve what is the will of God.

That's the Greek word order. Then it says that will of God is the good, the agathon. It is the acceptable, you are raised on, and it is the perfect or complete.

Talio means you've come to the end of it. You have found the whole thing. Talio has the idea of the end, the culmination, the finish, the finished product.

So he goes on to say, by the way, in Romans chapter 12, I say through the grace given to me, to

everyone who is among you not to think more highly than one ought to think. We tend to think too high. We put ourselves too high in the scale of values.

We should think soberly as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith. And people say, well, now, see, I'm just not very faithful because God measured out a very small faith to me and he measured out a big faith to that person over there. The measure of faith that God deals out is not the quantity of faith.

It is the category of faith. Some of us are really good in coping with daily circumstances. Other people are really good in seeing areas of ministry or opportunity.

Others are really good at believing God for provision. And that's the great thing in an assembly. When we interact with one another, some people, every time you talk to them, even if you go to visit them in the hospital because you want to cheer them up and you wind up being cheered up by them when you visit, because that is their gift.

That is their measure of faith. They are great at trusting God when the chips are down. There are other people that are really good at keeping a level head in prosperous times and saying, well, let's not forget the giver as we look at the gift and let's not forget who we are just because there's a stimulating environment.

The measure of faith, it is like a combat team, the air ground task force that the Marine Corps puts together. You have your air wing, you have your ground guys, you have your supporting arms, you have your logistics, you have intelligence, you have all these different things. Each of these has a measure.

Well, you can't say air is better than ground or logistics is better than intel, artillery is better than tanks, although I think they are, but you can't really say that because each branch, each part has been given a measure. This is your area of responsibility and this is where you have to trust God. This is where you have to avail yourself of what God has provided.

There's been a lot of misunderstanding about this God dealing a measure of faith and they think, well, it's the amount. It's not the amount, it's the classification, it's the area of faith. We know that we have weaknesses.

I am easily worried. I'm easily confused. I'm easily knocked for a loop when something sudden comes up.

There's other people, sudden challenges are their forte. Give me a sudden challenge anytime. It's the unexpected I handle best.

It's the slow grinding tests that I fall apart on. Well, this person over here is great at the slow grinding tests. It's the surprises that they can't handle.

So God will marry them to each other and they can, you know, what one can't do the other one

can. And so we complement and supplement and fill in the gaps. And in a local assembly, God will blend together people who are gifted and who have that measure of faith that creates a well-rounded entity.

Well, all of this goes back to looking at our lives in these categories, religion, worship, reverence, time, authority, respect for the lives of other people, not just their physical life and leaving them breathing even though we might want to kill them or allowing them their space even though we want to hate them. But respect for life includes a lot. It is, you know, live and let live is a saying that we understand to mean let someone live their life, respect their right to make their decision before the Lord and to sin and to go into evil and to do whatever else they are before the Lord.

I have to make my decisions about people and about how much contact I have with them. But I am not the jury and the executioner. I am not going to pass a judgment and sentence and then inflict it on them.

I respect their life. And when the Bible says thou shalt not murder, you have to draw that line and say I perceive something here and I know where to draw the line of my interaction with that person. Purity goes far beyond just adultery.

This is where we pick up in our list of specific commands in Exodus chapter 20 where on the second table of the law God says thou shalt not commit adultery. This is used throughout the Old Testament scriptures as a metaphor for spiritual infidelity. And the root meaning of adultery is vow breaking.

It is the breaking of covenant. It is the breaking of promise. The specific area where this comes into application for us, oddly enough, is in the area of divorce.

We don't generally go down this road very often, but you know in the New Testament where they ask Jesus is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife? And Jesus says basically no. Moses allowed you to divorce your wives because of the hardness of your heart. And then he goes on and he says you are not to divorce your wife except in the case of adultery.

So I attended a church in northeast Oklahoma where people and the pastor taught this from the pulpit. If you want to be legitimately divorced from an unfaithful spouse, you must document their adultery. You're going to have to hire an investigator or do something because just the fact that they're going out or that they're having drinks or that they're partying away with somebody, unless the physical act of adultery has taken place, you're not allowed to divorce them.

So my question is well now how am I supposed to set up a nanny cam or something behind a book somewhere and try to get photographic evidence and how much is enough? I mean what exactly constitutes enough to say okay that was adultery and so now I can divorce this unfaithful? It misses the whole point. It's just like everything else we do when we over literalize.

Pornia is the word translated adultery and it's where we get pornography, pornos, pornia and the root meaning of that is unfaithfulness.

Now people would take this and say well you promised me you'd pick up eggs at the grocery store and you didn't. You broke your promise. We're finished.

And most of the time when you find the truth of what God's Word teaches, you can see where it can easily be abused. Confess your sins. He's faithful and just to forgive.

Okay well I'm just going to run riot on my sins and I'll just name them and God will forgive me. Many things people say well that can't be right because it's too easily abused. Well I'm sorry but this is what the Word of God teaches.

When it says that divorce is legitimate in the case of pornia, there is a case where a woman with or without children starts getting knocked around by her spouse and there is wife beating. There is abuse and they have women's shelters for this kind of thing for people to flee to. This is breaking of the vow.

If this is a problem and it begins to be a habitual thing, it is legitimate from the Word of God. I'm telling you from the Bible that woman needs to divorce that man. If the man cannot keep from hitting the woman, the woman needs to divorce him.

And if she has got children, she needs to take them along because that is pornia. That is in this category of vow breaking. What was the vow? I will honor.

I will love. I will stick with and support in sickness and in health. Every part of that vow is broken and that is adultery against the marriage.

It is an evil and I mean an evil. It's not a one-time thing. If this begins to be a pattern and the woman gets to decide when it's a pattern.

By the way there have been men who have been battered. There are battered men who have domineering wives who knock them around and the man can leave. When the Bible talks about be not unequally yoked together with an unbeliever and people say well that means you've got to make sure the person is a Christian.

I am here to tell you that the word there is faithless. Be not unequally yoked together with a faithless person and you can reach the place in a marriage where there is no way to honor God in that union. This one person has eschewed all things having to do with God, doesn't care about God, doesn't want to know about God and is dragging the other spouse away from God and making it impossible for that person to learn and to grow.

There are husbands who forbid their wives to attend church and that sort of thing and there is a point that can be reached where a divorce in those circumstances is legitimate from the Word of God. People get so legalistic. You look at what God intends a marriage to be and it is the

union of two people and they need to be on the same sheet of music when it comes to spiritual things.

Now there's a wide degree of latitude but there are many people who realize that there is no possible way God can be honored in a marriage because of pornia, because of some condition that is not healing, is not trying to heal, isn't going to heal and is making their spiritual life impossible and yet they have this legalistic thing that says well you just can't get divorced and so they wind up continuing to get slapped around, continuing to have physical violence and that sort of thing and it's a shame that they do not understand what verse 14 of Exodus chapter 20 means. You shall not commit adultery. You shall not sin against your marriage.

You shall not commit evil against your marriage and there are a lot of things that qualify as pornia. Paul in the New Testament tells people stick with it if you can but if you have a faithless spouse who wants to depart let them go. He says you are not bound and people say that's talking about Christian and unchristian is talking about faithful growing believers and faithless people whether they are believers or not and you have to answer to the Lord.

People say well if you say that that's just going to be abuse. People are going to be dissolving their marriages. Well if someone abuses that they're going to have to answer to the Lord.

I mean what's the difference if you're citing the Bible to do a thing or to not do a thing and ostensibly you're honoring the Lord then hear the word. Hear what the word says and do what the word says. You shall not commit adultery.

You shall not steal. Respect for property. This covers everything from software piracy to cheating on your taxes to failing to acknowledge people when something is due them.

Recognition is due them or honor is due them. There are a lot of things that can be stolen. You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.

It goes far beyond the courtroom to misrepresent to hang a reputation on someone especially when your purpose is not to be helpful. If there's someone who is known for chiseling and cheating in business and let's say he's a roofer. He puts riffs on and you know that this guy came and said that he was going to tear the rift down to this scratch and fix the under surface and put on new tar paper and put on new shingles and in fact all he did was nail some cheap shingles over what you already have and then you hear someone who's going to hire a roofer and they say well I think I'm going to use old what's his name to say well I might let you know that this is what this man did on this other roof.

Now that's not bearing false witness but to decide that you don't like the color of his skin or the way he paints his truck or whatever and to hang a reputation or you heard third-hand that he's bad and so you spread that around. That's bearing false witness. You have no knowledge of the truth.

You shall not covet the house, the wife, the servant, the female servant, ox, donkey, anything

that is your neighbor's. We've talked about this in some detail. Look at verse 18 though.

Now all the people witnessed the thunderings, the lightning flashes, the sound of the trumpet, the mountain smoking. When the people saw it they trembled and stood far off and they said to Moses you speak with us and we will hear. Let not God speak with us lest we die.

What I find interesting here is that in our day and age John says the exact opposite. He says you have no need that any man teach you because you have the spirit of God. God can speak directly to you through his word and through his spirit.

This is something that we treasure and that we prize and yet when God spoke even in the hearing of the Israelites they said we don't want to hear God speak anymore. You speak with us. You give us the short form of it.

We don't want to hear God directly. You ask people today would you like to have been there when Jesus gave the Sermon on the Mount assuming of course you could understand Aramaic and the rest of it. People say oh I would love to have been there and have heard the teaching from the lips of Jesus.

These people are basically in a similar position but God scares them to death and there is an attitude that you find, sometimes we find it in ourselves and you can observe it in others, where people say I don't really want to know too much about the Bible or what God has to say because I'll become responsible for it and I just really would rather not know or they will put a reputation on God and say oh you know that biblical stuff that just that's what got the Inquisition going and that's there's been a lot of abuse and the Catholics robbing the Mexicans and there's just people doing things in the name of the Bible. I don't want to hear what God has to say. This is what you basically have here.

You speak with us and we will hear. Let not God speak with us lest we die. Moses tries to assure them in verse 20 he says do not fear God has come to test you and that his fear may be before you so that you may not sin.

The closer we come to God the less we're going to be motivated to sin. God has come to test you. If his fear is before you you will not sin.

This is essentially what Moses is saying. That's a healthy fear. It's good to respect God but don't flee from him.

But verse 21 and if your new King James says so it's a wow consecutive and all that but I would translate this as but. This is sort of an adversative idea. God has come to test you that his fear may be before you so you may not sin.

But the people stood afar off and Moses drew near. What's the difference in the people and Moses? He's a Hebrew just like they are. He doesn't, I started to say he doesn't glow in the dark but actually at this point he does.

Look at the difference in attitude. Moses drew near the thick darkness where God was and you notice there is a thick darkness that has descended because when people don't want to know about God they're not going to see him and the thick darkness is going to shroud him. God is not going to reveal himself to those who do not want the revelation.

If you want the revelation you've got to get past the thick darkness and go in where the light is and Moses is going to go in so much so we'll see a little later that when he comes down from the mountain his skin is glowing because of the brightness of the presence of God. But all these people see is thick darkness. Why? Because that's all they want to see.

And when you talk to people and the subject of God comes up we want to be sensitive. Are they curious? Are they asking? Are they seeking? Are they looking for the door to open? If they are not you are wasting your time trying to speak the truth of God or trying to get them to see the biblical principle that applies or what God can do. Because people who say I don't want to hear from God that's the pearls before swine scenario.

Remember when Jesus told that story he said do not cast your pearls in front of the swine because if you do they will turn and gore you to pieces and that tells you that the swine were running away when the guy threw the pearls. He says no wait come back and he tries to throw the pearls out in front of him so that they'll see it and say oh pearls and come back trotting up like a friendly dog and say where's more pearls? He says no when you throw the pearls out there in front of them they are already running away they will turn it will anger them and they will just tear you to pieces. There are people in fact most people don't want the truth of God it's just a fact of life.

Most people do not want the truth and you waste your time trying to shove it at them. We can speak the truth and see if it creates a response see if it creates an interest but be conservative because you'll be casting your pearls before swine. The people stood afar off Moses drew near in the thick darkness.

Now look at verse 22 the Lord said to Moses thus you shall say to the children of Israel you have seen that I have talked with you from heaven you shall not make anything to be with me and you notice anything to be is in italics. Basically you shall not make with me is what it says. And it's difficult in Hebrew so they throw these other words in.

But look at the rest of the sentence. Gods of silver or gods of gold you shall not make for yourselves you shall not make with me. This is a reiteration of the first commandment you shall have no other gods before me you shall not and the second commandment you shall not make any graven image.

Notice this is repetition this is review this is the same principle in another form. You shall not make you shall not manufacture a with me you shall not manufacture a me to be with. People want something they can hold want something they can see they want something tangible.

He says that that's that's a with me something to associate with me something to identify with me. He says don't make a with me don't make them. No gods of silver no gods of gold don't make them.

An altar of earth you shall make for me and you shall sacrifice on it your burnt offerings and your peace offerings your sheep and your oxen. In every place where I record my name I will come to you and I will bless you. And if you make an altar of stone you shall not built it of hewn stone for if you use your tools on it you have profaned it.

Nor shall you go up by steps to my altar that your nakedness may not be exposed on it. What is this about. You remember when we categorize the Ten Commandments.

The first one was religion. The second one was worship. We're going back down that list aren't we.

Religion don't make a with me. Don't put a god before me. Don't make a graven image.

Now he's talking about worship. Make an altar of earth. You know the great thing about earth.

You can't gild it. You can't decorate it. You can't gussy it up.

You can't over decorate it. It's just earth. It's just a pile of rocks.

What's the very first thing in the Bible. In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. If you're going to worship God use what God created.

Don't try to improve on God's design. Don't try to improve on God's materials. That's why he says if you make an altar of stone don't hew the stones.

This altar would really look better if we would face these stones and make them nice and smooth. Make a nice little square altar with perpendicular corners. He says don't dress it up.

Just stack the rocks and that's the altar. You know why. Because it is not the altar that counts.

It is the sacrifice on the altar that counts. If you are looking at worshipping God this was the problem with Cain and why he killed his brother Abel. His sacrifice was not accepted.

Why? It was the work of his hands. The sheep are the work of God. You just are a steward over something that God creates.

When Cain created the big tossed salad and took to God it was the work of his hands. It did not conform to God's command. It needed to be a blood sacrifice.

This had already been communicated verbally. He said this is something I have done. We have in a lot of our modern worship.

I can help this. I can make it better. I can hew the stones of the altar.

It draws attention to the altar instead of the sacrifice on the altar. I can make it better. I can make it better.

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