***Lights in the World - PH42-01  
  
Advanced Bible Doctrine - Philippians 2:14-15***

As you know, we are studying the Ten Commandments as an expression of the righteousness of God. These commandments, we have pointed out, are general principles of morality, which cover many specific situations of thought and conduct. They are absolutes of right and wrong from God's viewpoint which express His essence and His character. Biblical morality, as it is found in both the Old and New Testaments, is specifically designed to preserve human freedom during this era of the angelic conflict. These absolutes of morality will enable the believer in the church age to be a light in the world. We have departed from Philippians 2:14-16 in order to explain in greater detail what Paul means about believers being lights in this world in this present wicked age.

Freedom comes from God, we have learned, as an unalienable right for every human being. It was a divine institution established in the Garden of Eden when God told Adam and Eve that they could do this and could do that. They could not do one thing, but it was clear that they had a will that they were free to exercise.

I don't know whether you've ever taken a closer look at the words of the song America. The melody that we know is, of course, the national anthem of the British people. It's the English national anthem. The name of it in England is God Save the King. We have taken the same melody and given new words to it. The song and the words as we know it was first sung on July 4th, 1832 in the famed Park Street Church in Boston, Massachusetts. I want to read the words to you of these four short verses because the person who wrote these verses (the lyrics), understood, again, this biblical principle, which is so widely ignored, or not known, that liberty is God's desire for every human being, and it is He who has given us liberty. Thus, in every verse of America, freedom is referred to.

The first verse says, "My country, tis of thee, sweet land of liberty, of thee I sing. Land where my fathers died, land of the pilgrim's pride, from every mountainside let freedom ring."

The second verse: "My native country thee, land of the noble free, thy name I love. I love thy rocks and rills, thy woods and temple hills. My heart with rapturous thrills like that above."

The third verse: "Let music swell the breeze, and ring through all the trees, sweet freedom's song. Let mortal tongues awake. Let all that breathe partake. Let rocks their silence break, the sound prolong."

Then here is the climax of it all in the fourth verse: "Our fathers' God to thee, author of liberty, to thee we sing. Long may our land be bright, with freedom's holy light. Protect us by thy might. Great God, our King."

America is a grand hymn to sing. We usually sing the first verse. We probably ought to fall into the habit of more often singing the fourth verse which so clearly identifies that liberty is our heritage as human beings, and it is a gift of the grace of God. It is no one's to give us, and it is nobody's right to take it away from us.

Freedom: what does it mean? Well, it means to choose, to act for yourself under legitimate laws. It means to be able to choose your own livelihood, and to change it anytime you get tired of your job. It means for you to go to school or to go to work or to do what you wish with your day. It means to be able to move where you please and to be able to move in privacy. This is strictly violated in a nation like Russia. There, whatever town you live in, you have to be registered with the local police. If you leave the town that you live in and go and visit another town, and you stay in that town for more than three days, you must go immediately and register with the local police.

This is such obvious violation of a scriptural principle that it's pathetic. Liberty means to be able to own property, and to do with it as you desire, including taking it to another country with you. That's another thing that totalitarian collectivist governments will not allow for--people to leave and take what they have earned and what they have gained with them into another country. Liberty means to be able to receive protection against the aggressiveness of the old sin nature, both internal aggressiveness and external aggressiveness.

**Equality**

The Bible does not grant equality to every person. Equality means that there has to be a master and a slave. Let us get that very clear if it is not clear already. I get a little tired of hearing college students, who think they're all that bright, promoting the idea that what we need is equality--to make things equal. Equality always requires, first of all, a master. The master then enforces to produce equality, and under equality, there are always slaves. Get that straight. That is the order. There can never be equality without a master on the top, and a slave underneath. Then everybody will have the same amount of money. Then everybody will have the same food, and so on. There is equality, certainly, in opportunity, before the law. This is equal opportunity to demonstrate unequal abilities. Men are created with equal rights under the law. Freedom means recognition of God, and the divine institution of volition. So you can either have equality, or you can have freedom, but you will not have both. Thank God that we have a government that was put together by men who understood the difference between equality and freedom.

**The Doctrine of Freedom**

So let's summarize now the doctrine of freedom. There are several points we should have learned, and learned well.

1. Freedom is the power to act for oneself or to exercise one's volition freely in a responsible manner. This is freedom to make your own choices. This is the divine institution of volition.
2. Freedom comes from God to each human being as an inalienable right. Governments do not give freedom to their citizens. Governments are designed to protect the freedom which God has given to their citizens. Governments, therefore, have no right to take freedom of choice from their people in any way. Our government has now aggressively taken away the choices of people on a wide-scale basis. This indicates that our government is beginning to move away from the place of God's blessing.

There are two things that a nation can do that are the kiss of death upon it. One is to start eroding the freedom of people that has been given them by God in one way or another, and moving toward a collectivist system and mentality. The other thing is for our nation to be antagonistic to the Jewish people. Any nation that takes away liberty from people is a nation that is on its way to destruction. Any nation that is antagonistic to the Jewish people is a nation that comes under the curse that was delivered to Abraham, and that nation will be doomed. Volition (or freedom) is a divine institution, and it cannot be violated with impunity.

Freedom is not self-perpetuating, but must be protected in each generation. During the present era in which we live of the angelic warfare, Satan seeks to destroy the divine institution of volition. Freedom, therefore, must be defended against the aggressive expressions of the old sin nature. This will be personal, and thus we must have a police system for internal security of a nation. And it will be external, so we must have a military to protect us against the expressions of the aggressions of the external.

1. The moral absolutes of the Ten Commandments are designed to protect freedom for humanity. Therefore, these apply to believers and unbelievers. These moral principles were given to the Jewish people immediately when they had crossed the Red Sea and had entered freedom after 400 years of slavery, and then God told them how to preserve it. That's the point of these moral principles.
2. Freedom connotes responsibility for one's choices. You cannot blame other people for the consequence of how you use your freedom. Some people eventually misuse their freedom, and thus they end up in the penitentiary. But often they are quite willing to blame other people for their situation. How you use your freedom determines the results--blessing or otherwise.

If emotions dominate your soul, then the sense of individual responsibility will be lost. People who are not oriented in their minds to the Word of God are people whose emotions control their souls. Those people lose their sense of responsibility for their freedom. Those of you who are parents should be aware of the fact that it is your duty to teach your children that freedom means responsibility. So when your kid abuses a freedom within your home, then make him responsible by suffering for the abuse of his freedom, and deny him a portion of his freedom until he learns that freedom and responsibility go together. That way you have hope that he will grow up and not be blaming somebody else for the circumstances and the situations in which he finds himself in his own life.

1. Freedom is essential for evangelism and the teaching of Bible doctrine. It is freedom that makes it possible for a human being to have a personal relationship with God through believing the gospel. It is freedom to teach the Word of God that makes it possible for a Christian to develop a spiritual maturity structure in his soul in order to have a container in which God can fill with blessing. Again, if you were living in a country like Russia or China (a communist country), one of the first things that would be evident to you in the way of a denial of freedom would be that you have no access to the Word of God. You do not have the right to be told the gospel, and you do not have the right to listen to the Word of God, and to be able to take doctrine into your soul. That is a horrendous denial of freedom.
2. Freedom is the right to choose good or evil (Galatians 5:13). All sin, known and unknown, is the result of a choice that we have made. Every command in the Bible implies freedom for the soul to choose one way or another. Freedom includes the option of doing what is right, as well as the option to do what is wrong.
3. Freedom is the basis for the function of true love. One thing that you cannot legislate, I'll guarantee you, is love. Where love does not exist, you won't pass a rule to force people to love one another. There are plenty of people around who try to do this. If a man is not free to be a pursuer, and a woman is not free to be a responder, there is no possibility of love--none in the world. A husband or wife may lack freedom in love because they're attached to a false object of devotion and loyalty. Thus, because they are attached to a false object; a false person; or, a false cause, they cannot be free to love the person that they should be loving. A husband or a wife may lack the capacity to love because of some experience in the past which is hindering the freedom of expression. Love has to be cut loose and be free. Otherwise it cannot find its expression.
4. Freedom is protected by the things which God prohibits in His moral absolutes (2 Peter 2:19). Of course, that's what we've been saying all along. This is the thing that protects our freedom. You obey the moral principles of the Ten Commandments, not because they are the Ten Commandments. We realize that they, as such, do not apply to believers. However, the righteousness which they express, which is totally repeated in the New Testament, which does apply to us as believers: these principles of righteousness, when obeyed, will give you the maximum freedom in life.

Freedom in the fullest sense begins with personal regeneration (Galatians 5:1). Unless you are a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, you cannot be free. Many colleges and universities love to quote the phrase from the Bible, "You shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." They mean that if you will open your science book and learn the true facts of science, you will be free. They mean that if you will open your mathematics book and learn the true facts of mathematics, you'll be free. That is not so. There are many brilliant minds who know all that science has, and who know all that mathematics has, and they're the greatest slaves in the world. This is because freedom begins in the soul. While their bodies were free, their souls were slaves. So don't think because you learn natural facts of science; mathematics; history; sociology; or, anything else, that you'll be free. That is not so.

That Scripture verse means that you shall know the truth of regeneration of the gospel, and that truth shall make you free. Then all the rest of the truth of Scripture will make you free. Any truth, indeed, in the natural realm, which is compatible with the mind of God, will also contribute to your freedom. But human freedom begins with personal regeneration.

1. Freedom is the result of knowing and obeying the Word of God (John 8:32-34).
2. People are free because of the grace of God. I hope that you often have stopped and breathed a sigh of relief and said, "God, I could have been born in Russia. I thank You that I wasn't. I could have been born in China. I thank You that I wasn't. I could have been born in any number of countries on the face of the earth. And the first thing I would have been born into was slavery and the loss of freedom."

It is the grace of God that you have been born under freedom, as no nation in the history of the world has ever known it before. The reason we have known it is because our heritage has been based upon the moral principles of the Ten Commandments. There is a reason that our freedoms are slipping away from us; that we are having big brothers and wise bureaucrats increasingly governing our lives; and, that the people do not have a choice and a freedom in the decision-making mechanisms that affect their own lives. This is because we are getting away from the Ten Commandments. We are becoming a base immoral people.

If you think that's extreme, had you watched the three-hour television program the other night on morality in the United States, you would have gotten a real eye opener. That program was designed to help pass the Equal Rights Amendment--the amendment which is before our state legislatures supposedly to give women equal rights with men, which means to make slaves of women so they can dig ditches; lay bricks; and, do all the other fine things that women in Russia get to do. Our military service now has military camps with coed barracks so that women can be degraded.

I watched a television program the other night, and one man was talking about being in a men's washroom, and a lady walked in. They were just so cute about it as they talked about it. Not one of them said, "That woman is cheap; degraded; and, is an arrogant person who is imposing upon the privacy of these men." Apparently, it never occurred to one of these idiots to say that maybe those men did not welcome her presence at that point in time. They all thought, "Well, this is the times, you know, where we're becoming freer." But this is the degraded, obscene, cheap, crude, vulgar, animal-level of mentality of the American public, where it sits back like a bunch of dolts, and it accepts the violation of even ordinary decency, and of the basic principles of even privacy. When freedom goes, the first thing you lose is privacy. Privacy has to go under a collectivist system. What did that lady want? She wanted equality. Well, she may yet get equality, and she may yet look back on the day with regret when she wanted that kind of equality.

Commandment number one said that you will not have a false God before you, beyond the true and living God Jehovah Elohim. That is the first moral absolute. Mankind will have no other god beyond Jehovah Elohim. When there are other gods, they are inventions of man's mind. The issue here is the focus of your soul--the object of your supreme love. We talked about the Shema Israel, the "Hear, O, Israel," in Deuteronomy 6:4-5. The Shema Israel, which the Jew repeats morning and evening is a statement of the focus of his soul upon Jehovah Elohim: to love Him with all of his heart; with all of his mind; and, with all of his strength.

**False Gods**

Today, you and I may violate the first commandment in many, many modern ways. Let's look at a few violations of the first commandment, lest you think that you and I cannot be guilty of having another god beyond Jehovah Elohim. Any form of idolatry is what is meant by this first commandment--devotion to anyone else other than to Jehovah Elohim. Psalm 96:4-5 and 1 Thessalonians 1:9 explain that to us.

Remember that every person has a god. Each of you here has a God. There is something that holds supreme control over every person's mind. The question is whether you are worshiping the true God or whether you are worshiping some god of your own creation which is beyond Jehovah Elohim. There's nothing beyond Him. Out there, there is nothing. So your devotion would be to nothing--a false god--maybe an abstract idea as well as a material thing. Such gods and such idols are clearly forbidden in the Word of God (1 John 5:21).

1. **Food**

For example, your modern god, beyond Jehovah Elohim, may be an appetite for food. Food may be the false god that you worship (Philippians 3:18-19). There are many people who live to eat rather than eat to live. They are often easily identifiable. Those people are indifferent to many valuable and important things in life. But they are highly motivated about food. All kinds of things can be significant in life, and they'll just kind of go along with it. But you talk about food, and the eyes begin to glow, and there is a warmth in the heart. It just moves everything about them. The blood begins to flow, and you can just see them begin to quiver all over. What they have is a god there. It is something that holds the focus of your attention of your soul--the focus of your soul. Eating is to be a part of the way that we bring glory to God. 1 Corinthians 10:31 tells us that. Therefore, appetite for food should not be a god. It is a widespread god in our society.

1. **Money**

Another God, of course, can be money (1 Timothy 6:17, Matthew 6:24). I hope you will take the trouble to look up these verses. I wish we could take the time to do that. They contain very significant statements, and one is suddenly startled by realizing how much the Bible has to say about the possible false gods that we may not think about as gods. This is by far, of course, the most popular American god. It is a god which is enhanced by our marvelous free enterprise system which enables a person to rise in his economic possessions as per his application and ability. This god makes possible many lesser false deities for our souls. It makes it possible for us to devote ourselves to many lesser deities because we have the money to do it.

This god is a particularly injurious one to the soul. 1 Timothy 6:10 indicates that it is a false love, and it is a love which will destroy you. We have the example of the rich young ruler in Luke 18:22-24. Those pathetic verses present a young man who could say that he obeyed the moral absolutes. Then the Lord says, "Well, you have one other thing you need to do. Go and get rid of your wealth." The Scriptures say that he went away sorrowing because he had great wealth. Jehovah Elohim was not his God. Money was his god. The Lord confronted him with that fact in a very pointed way. He would do anything, even lose his soul, for that god, as many will today.

Certainly, we have the story of the rich young fool who did exactly that in Luke 12:16-20. Here was the man who had everything he could ask for in a material way, and who envisioned himself retiring to the enjoyment of his wealth. God says, "Thou fool. Tonight shall thy soul be required of thee, then whose shall all these things be?" And don't you forget that either. There's going to come a time when you're going to check out. Then whose shall all of these things be--this god of money to whom you have devoted yourself?

About the time you think you're a good gambler, and it's not going to happen to you, and you've managed to elude it, you better be careful. That is because getting sick with something that's irreversible has a way of happening overnight. This is the most popular American god. Because it is so widely dignified, it is easy for you and me to accept it too. That is because we're bucking our whole society when we say that money will not be my supreme focus. What I have I will hold lightly. God help you if you don't learn to hold your money lightly. Whatever your practice is with your material things reveals the God you love and the God you obey. What you do with your money reveals what it is and who it is that you love and obey (Luke 12:29-31).

There is another thing while we're on the subject. Romans 13:8 tells us not to owe any man anything. If you incur debts that you cannot pay, it is a sure sign that your god is money. When you incur debts you cannot pay, you have slipped into making money your god. Material things mean money. For you to take material things that you cannot pay for means that money has become your god, and your focus is on that.

1. **Satan**

Satan is a God (2 Corinthians 4:4). We need not labor this point. All that we hear about us today makes it quite clear that for many people, Satan is god, and I mean openly their god. They gather in church services. They gather in meetings such we do, and they gather for the specific purpose of worshiping Satan as their god.

1. **Atheism**

Atheism is a form of deity. Psalm 53:1 says that's the viewpoint of a fool is that there is no God. But it leads to the worship of evil. Romans 1:28-32 explains to us how degenerate mankind becomes when it moves to the position where atheism becomes its god--that there is no God. Russia is the first nation in the history of mankind to have as a stated national policy the god of atheism. There has never been in history a nation which did not have a god. Russia alone holds this honor, and atheism is, in effect, her god. If you know anything about prophetic Scriptures, you know what is in the future for Russia. It is horrible to contemplate. What those people are going to face, and what they are going to go through is the worst, perhaps, that any nation has ever experienced. God says to Russia that the god of atheism is a delusion, and you are a fool for devoting yourself to it.

1. **Sensuality**

Another god, of course, is sensuality (1 Thessalonians 4:7-8, Acts 15:20). The TV program the other night made it very clear. It presented all of the devious, new, clever, inventive ways that Americans have for being sensual; for being violators of the moral code of the Word of God; for dignifying it; and, for accepting it. These included sexual immorality, as well as other kinds of immorality.

1. **Knowing and Controlling the Future**

Next is knowing and controlling the future as your god. Astrology and séances are gods who are substituting for the guidance of the Spirit of God (Deuteronomy 18:9-14, Isaiah 47:13-14). There are many people who daily rush to read their horoscopes. They have a daily rush to see what that day holds for them. Our newspaper has regularly been carrying full page ads where you can fill out a form, and for a small fee, you can have your horoscope structured for you, if you can tell them the day and exactly the time when you were born. Then your future and the way you should conduct your life will be told you. For many people, this is their god.

This is not just the folks who happen to read the local newspaper. This is the people who are in positions of power and authority in our government. It is always shocking to discover that a governor of some state said, "Well, I want to be sworn in at this point in time; on this day; and, at this exact moment." Why? Because he's been consulting with his astrologer.

Or somebody says, "I'm going to get married right at this moment in time because I want everything good." Well, I can see how somebody would want an astrologer's advice there because marriage is the most dangerous thing you can do in life.

All of this is making someone a god other than Jehovah Elohim. Now, I know what you're doing. You're standing in the grocery line and you see these little books on horoscopes. You're a Sagittarius; you see the book on Sagittarius; you sit there while they're counting up your bill; you're combing through it; and, you're reading about yourself. And you're saying, "Ooh, that is me. Oh, that's what I should do. Ah, I don't believe that." You put it away. And then the situation arises. And what do you do? You remember what you read at the supermarket, and subconsciously it leads you and directs you. It's a dangerous business to be reading those things, and I'd advise you not to do it, even if you're reading it without buying the book. It's cheap advice that's going to get you into trouble. That is because you subconsciously program yourself not to be responsive to doctrine and to God the Holy Spirit in your moves in life. You're doing it upon what the stars and the planets have said for you.

1. **Coveting**

The Bible says that covetousness is a false god (Colossians 3:5). Covetousness is desiring things. One of the moral absolutes, of course, is the forbidding of the spirit of covetousness. But covetousness here is also declared wrong because it is a god. Of course, you can see how this is tied in with materialism: the things you want in life; the things you desire; the position; the fame; the material things; and, the immaterial things. All of these things can become various gods for you.

1. **Political Entities**

Of course, one of the outstanding things is that of political entities becoming gods. The ancient world had its divine kings, men who were viewed as deities. Even in our day, one of the things that made the campaign of World War II in the South Pacific such a monumental job in facing the enemy of the Japanese on the islands and the atolls of the Pacific was that the Marines were facing an enemy who believed his king was God. He believer that the emperor was descended from the deities. Furthermore, he believed that if he as a Japanese soldier died on this little Pacific atoll fighting for the emperor, he would immediately go to what we would call heaven. So he had everything going for him, and thus it was that it was so difficult to take an island without systematically killing every one of the Japanese on the island. If there were 50,000, you were lucky to have 100 left over as captives, and they were people who were wounded and couldn't get away from you.

Ancient people have always had kings who were viewed as deities, and the Romans did this. That's what gave Christians so much trouble. When Christians were brought into court for persecution, they would say, "Say 'Caesar is Lord.'" The word "Lord," you know, means dignity. A Christian either had to say, "Caesar is Lord," and thus deny his Lord Jesus Christ, or he had to refuse and die. The authority of a king in this case was viewed as absolute. The state itself led the citizens in religion--worship of the king god. These were often brutal, immoral, sex-involved orgies as well as human sacrifices.

This is the same thing we have today in any totalitarian state such as under communism. It is the state which is claiming to be God. The state has total power over people. The state tells you: where you may work, and where you may not work; if you can go to school, or not go to school; and, where you may live, and where you may not live. In exchange for that, they give you equality: all of your medical expenses; all of your food; all of your housing, such as it is; and, all of your needs. You are taken care of just like some farmer takes care of his pigs and his hogs and his cattle out in the barn.

However, you will also notice that in those countries, there is a violent repression of biblical Christianity and of the Bible's God. Lenin was smart when he set up a system of atheism for communism because the God of the Bible is a God that raises the hopes of freedom within the human breast. He recognized that, and thus he knew that the Bible and its God had to go. The movement in collectivism is to set up false gods who are in authority in order to control the future. Thus we have people in government today who are so sure that they are going to straighten out the problems of our society. They're so sure that they're going to be able to handle the environmental situation. They're going to handle the poverty situations. They're going to handle the crime situations. And they're going to be doomed to great disappointment.

There's only one person that's going to straighten that out, and that's Jesus Christ when He comes to set up the millennial kingdom. Until then, it's going to get worse. Power to you for all the help and ability you may bring, and the hopes and the ideas you may apply to it, but you are doomed to failure. Remember that legitimacy to govern comes when you obey the moral absolutes of the Word of God. Legitimacy is not just because you were elected, as we have recently learned on the national scale. Legitimacy is because you were elected by the proper process, and then you are subject to the moral code of the Word of God.

1. **Humanism**

Another god is humanism, the god of the liberal mentality. Man's reason is elevated as god. It claims our children. This humanism says your children belong to the state to be educated in a humanistic viewpoint. Six parents in the state of Ohio are under court indictment for the fact that they refused to send their children to the public school, and instead sent their children to a Christian school which did not have state approval and accreditation. As you know, the state of Texas is considering a bill in the legislature in order to bring all private Christian schools under the state welfare department so that they may impose upon us the kind of teachers we may hire; the kind of curriculum we may pursue; the books we use; and, the requirement to report to the state for the education of our children.

The people of Texas better rise up like a mighty army of the Lord and smash to bits that piece of legislation, and vote every legislator out of office that even breathes an idea like that. What they are saying is that your children are no longer your right to educate and to train, but they are the responsibility of the state. This violates the Word of God. You just search a passage like Deuteronomy 6, and it will make very clear to you whom God expected to be responsible for children, and it was the parents. It is the parents who are to give the viewpoint, the direction, and the education to their children. As a matter of fact, it is a very grave responsibility, and it's tough for parents to do it.

In the next session, we are going to take up a very startling passage. It's in the second commandment. When we get into it, we're going to get into the four-generation curse. I'm going to try to show you what happened to you because of the kind of father you had and because of what kind of mother you had. You're going to find this a very valuable piece of information in every area of life. God says, I'll put a four-generation curse upon parents who do not train their children in godliness. If you have a parent who has not been performing the role of training you in godliness, I guarantee you that you've got some problems that you need to override in a different way. Yet our legislature is going to decide for us whether we can select the teachers that we say are qualified to teach in the Christian schools, and whether we can train our children for a Christian viewpoint of life. The public schools should be for pagans. The public schools should be for non-Christians. It is designed for that. It is structured for that. Rightly, it should be that.

However, those of us who are believers in the Lord Jesus Christ should have the option open to educate our children in the real world that exists, not the delusion world of the god of humanism. The world system has established man's old sin nature through his reason as the source of decisions, values, and goals. The pursuit of our children is something you're going to hear more and more about. Children's liberation is on the way.

We are not to enter into fellowship with any of these false gods. You can multiply them. I just mentioned a few of the most prominent ones. There are many, many more. These will be a snare to the believer. They will be a destruction to those who pursue them.

Let us close with Exodus 23:32-33 which says, "Thou shalt make no covenant with them, nor with their gods. They shall not dwell in thy land, lest they make you sin against me. For if you serve their gods, it will surely be a snare unto you." If you have anything to do with these gods of our society, it will be a destructive force in your own life, and it would be the course of wisdom for you, and to teach your children, who these gods are, and thus to have nothing to do with them.

Let's add to that Deuteronomy 12:29: "When the Lord your God shall cut off the nations from before you, where you go to possess them, and you succeed them and dwell in their land (this is speaking to the Jews, entering the Promised Land and removing the heathen who were there), take Me to yourself that you be not snared by following them after they are destroyed from before you. And that you inquire not after their god saying, 'How did these nations serve their gods? Even so, will I do likewise.' Thou shalt not do so unto the Lord your God, for every abomination to the Lord which He hates have they done unto their gods. For even their sons and their daughters they have burned in fire to their gods. Whatever thing I command you (Bible doctrine), observe to do it. Thou shalt not add there to nor diminish from it."

God says, "When you come up against the gods of your society, do not inquire after them. But what you will inquire after is what I have commanded you. And that is what is in the precious Word of God--Bible doctrine. And to that you shall not add your own imaginations. From that, by your negative volition, you shall not diminish one whit."

You must know the Word before you can add or diminish from it, of course. Knowing the Word of God is the name of the game in the Christian way of life. To know the Word of God is to be able to identify the false gods.

Commandment number one is, "There shall be to you no other God beyond Me, Jehovah Elohim." What is your false God today? You better identify it, and you better dispose of it. For beyond Jehovah Elohim, there is nothing.

Father, we can thank You for Your grace and kindness. We thank You for the freedom which comes from obeying the authority of the Word of God, and for the moral groundwork You have given us as a nation and as personal individuals. So we pray that You will help us, as we continue this study of the commandments, to recognize that You are a merciful and a gracious God, who has indeed opened up to us the opportunity of living life in its fullest and richest way. Help us to remember, our Father, that when we go beyond You, we walk away from the best things in life that You have planned for us. We walk away from the wealth that You have prepared for us, perhaps. We walk away from the right man or the right woman in marriage. We walk away from the right friends. We walk away from our right teachers in the Word of God. We walk away from our right church fellowship. We walk away from our right livelihood. When we go beyond You, we walk away from everything that is the best. May that not be, we pray, for us. In Christ's name. Amen.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1973

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