

The Law Of First Things (Part III)

August 7, 2005

Exodus 20:1-17 (NKJV)

And God spoke all these words, saying:

[2] "I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. [3] **You shall have no other gods before Me.**

[4] "You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth; [5] you shall not bow down to them nor serve them. For I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and fourth generations of those who hate Me, [6] but showing mercy to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments.

[7] "You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain, for the Lord will not hold him guiltless who takes His name in vain.

[8] "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. [9] Six days you shall labor and do all your work, [10] but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord your God. In it you shall do no work: you, nor your son, nor your daughter, nor your male servant, nor your female servant, nor your cattle, nor your stranger who is within your gates. [11] For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it.

[12] "Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long upon the land which the Lord your God is giving you.

[13] "You shall not murder.

[14] "You shall not commit adultery.

[15] "You shall not steal.

[16] "You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.

[17] "You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife, nor his male servant, nor his female servant, nor his ox, nor his donkey, nor anything that is your neighbor's."

Three weeks ago I began a series of messages on the subject of "**The Law of First Things**". In the first two messages I spoke about how God demands that we give to Him the first fruits of what He gives to us. Over and over again we in the Bible are told that the first fruits belong to God and if we are careful to give it to Him He will bless us abundantly for it.

It is called the dedicated portion.

When you used it for yourself, it becomes a curse to you.
When you give it to God it becomes a great blessing to you.

Malachi 3:10 (NKJV)

Bring all the tithes into the storehouse,
That there may be food in My house,
And try Me now in this,"
Says the Lord of hosts,
"If I will not open for you the windows of heaven
And pour out for you such blessing
That there will not be room enough to receive it.

When God tells you to do something it is because He wants to bless you.

He wants you to prosper. He wants you to succeed! One of the reasons He gave us the Bible, which is His divine, inspired word, is to tell us what we must do to succeed.

Joshua 1:8 (NKJV)

This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For **then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success.**

Let's repeat the confession that John Osteen lead His congregation in every time he stood to preach....

**THIS IS MY BIBLE
I AM WHAT IT SAYS I AM.
I HAVE WHAT IT SAYS I HAVE.
I CAN DO WHAT IT SAYS I CAN DO.
TODAY I WILL BE TAUGHT THE WORD OF GOD.
I BOLDLY CONFESS MY MIND IS ALERT,
MY HEART IS RECEPYIVE.
I WILL NEVER BE THE SAME.
I AM ABOUT TO RECEIVE THE INCORRUPTIBLE,**

INDESTRUCTIBLE, EVER-LIVING SEED OF THE WORD OF GOD.

I WILL NEVER BE THE SAME.

NEVER, NEVER, NEVER.

I WILL NEVER BE THE SAME.

We need to believe that we are who God says we are and that we can have what He says we can have.

God wants us to be prosperous. He wants us to have a future and a hope. So He has given us His plan for us to prosper. **It's called the Bible!**

Why is giving the first thing so important to the Lord?

Because He wants us to understand that He must hold the first position in our lives. He cannot fill any other place we choose to give Him. It is impossible for God to become second or third. He is the Lord, God, Almighty and because of who He is, He demands **first** place.

If He's not Lord of all He's not Lord at all!

Today, I want to take this subject a step farther. I want to talk about how God demands first place not only in our finances but also in every area of our lives.

I told you that God has given us His word because He wants us to prosper! He wants to bless us! He told the people of Israel that if they would be careful to obey His commandments they would make their way prosperous and they would have good success.

The primary purpose of the commandments of God is not to limit our freedom or to make us feel bad when we do something wrong. **The primary purpose for the commandments of God is to help us, to give us principles by which to live our lives that will bring God's blessings to us.**

The commandments of God are His gift to us. If we keep them we make our way prosperous and have good success. If we do not keep them, we bring curses upon ourselves.

Deut. 28:1-2 (NKJV)

"Now it shall come to pass, if you diligently obey the voice of the Lord your God, to observe carefully all His commandments which I command you today, that the Lord your God will set you high above all nations of the earth. [2] And **all these blessings shall come upon you and overtake you, because you obey the voice of the Lord your God:**

Deut. 28:15 (NKJV)

"But it shall come to pass, if you do not obey the voice of the Lord your God, to observe carefully all His commandments and His statutes which I command you today, **that all these curses will come upon you and overtake you:**

There are many commandments in the Bible. Those that required the Israelites to offer animal sacrifices do not apply to us today because Jesus did away with all of that when He offered Himself as the sacrifice for our sins. But many of the commandments do apply to us today. God still commands us not to murder; not to commit adultery; not to steal, and etc

The Ten Commandments are as relevant today as they were back then. If we keep them we will make our way prosperous and if we break them we will bring a curse upon ourselves.

The laws of our great nation are based on the Ten Commandments that God gave to Moses. Living by the laws that God gave made America the greatest nation on earth. The Ten Commandments were displayed proudly in the schools and courts and government buildings throughout the land. Now, for some unexplained reason it is against the law to display the very commandments upon which the law was based. Today, I'm not going to talk about how wrong that is. I will simply say that the Ten Commandments were given by God and He hasn't changed His mind.

The commandment that I want to talk about today is the First one. The one that says, "You shall have no other gods before Me."

That commandment tells us that God must be our top priority. Nothing else should be more important to us in life as God is. Nothing should claim or govern our lives as much as God; not people, not things, not ideas, not hopes, not dreams, nothing! **Our first priority must be God and God alone.**

Jesus said....

Mark 12:30 (NKJV)

And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.' This is the first commandment.

We all know that we are supposed to do that, but it's not easy.

Especially in the twenty-first century here in America when we are faced with a myriad of choices that are pulling us in so many directions and that compete for first place in our lives.

But you know what, it was not easy even for Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden and they only had one choice to make. They could eat the fruit from any of the trees in the garden that they chose to eat but they were commanded not to eat the fruit of one particular tree, the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, because if they did, God said, they would die.

Can you imagine? They only had one choice to make, one priority to set: One commandment to keep and they would enjoy God's blessings forever.

But what did they do? That forbidden fruit looked so good: it looked good to their eyes, good to their stomachs, and so they took it and ate it. It became more important to them than obeying God's commandment. They broke the first commandment right then and there.

The fruit of that tree was chosen above God, above what God told them to do. They made a god out of that fruit. It was more important to them than their Creator, and they did it when they only had one choice to make. How much harder is it for us to keep the first commandment when we are faced with thousands of choices?

You know as well as I do that there are all kinds of things that compete for our attention and devotion today.

There are so many things that we can do. We live in America! Our lives are filled with choices. It's wonderful! We have the freedom to do whatever we choose to do.

The problem is, there's not enough time to do it all. We only have twenty-four hours in a day. We only have seven days in a week. We need to use some of that time to sleep. We've got to use eight or ten hours, five or six days a week, to work and earn a living. That makes us tired so we decide we need some recreation.

We think that maybe fishing will help. We decide to go fishing, but to fish, we need a boat. So we buy a boat and discover that we have to work a few extra hours every week to pay for the boat. And when we finally get to go fishing we've got to get everything ready and that takes time and then we get through we've got to clean everything up and that takes time.

We want to play golf or go bowling or go to the mall, but all of it takes time.

We want our kids to play little league sports and we want to watch them play but that takes a lot of time.

Life gets so hectic that we want to get away and rest, so we buy a weekend house by a lake, but we discover that a house by the lake requires a lot of maintenance and that requires more time. We go there to relax but all we do is work.

We find ourselves wishing that there were more hours in a day and more days in a week because we somehow think that if we had more time it would relieve the tremendous pressure that we are under. The truth is, unless we change our priorities and re-adjust our schedules, the only thing more time will do for us is add to our frustrations.

Most of the things we do are not sinful in themselves, but together they eat up so much time that we don't have any time left for God. And, therefore, whatever it is that we are doing that keeps us from worshipping God becomes a god that has become more important to us than God Himself.

But God demands first place in our lives. He says, “You shall have no other Gods before Me.”

I want to briefly deal with two questions:

1. Why? Why must we make sure that God is our top priority?
2. How? How do we do it?

First, Why? When our lives have become so busy doing so many different things, why should we make the effort to put God first?

Let me give you four reasons:

1. Because God is God! He is the Creator. He made us. He and He alone deserves to be worshipped.

Romans 1:20-22 (NKJV)

For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse, [21] because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened. [22] Professing to be wise, they became fools,

The simple truth is that creation proves that there is a Creator. The ultimate truth is that we were created by God. We acknowledge that fact by giving Him first place in our lives. If we refuse to give Him first place we deny His existence.

2. Because life is short and what we do during our short lifespan here on earth determines our eternal destiny. By putting God first now, we are guaranteed eternal life and great rewards in heaven.

2 Cor. 5:10 (NKJV)

For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.

3. Because God created us to function best when we put Him first. That's how we were made. It's how we were created. It's what we were made for. We were made to function best when we put God first. We will never enjoy life to its fullest potential unless God is in first place in our lives.
4. Because when we put God first, we bring Him pleasure.

Rev. 4:11 (KJV)

Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.

We honor God and give Him pleasure when we put Him first. That's an awesome thought. You and I can actually bring God pleasure through what we do and the priorities we set for our lives.

It is also true that we grieve God when we do not give Him first place.

Ephes. 4:30 (NKJV)

And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.

The final question is: How? In this hectic world we live in, how do we make sure that God is first?

The answer is by making sure that those other things do not take priority over your time with Him.

No matter how busy you may be you must set aside time to spend with Him. As Christians, the first day of the week is His day. I'm not saying that you can't do anything on Sunday but go to church. But I am saying that going to church should be your top priority.

If going to a ball game, or going fishing, or sleeping in, or visiting relatives, or working overtime, or anything else becomes more important to you than attending church on Sunday, then those other things, whatever they are, have become gods to you.

God is not your top priority. If you don't have time to pray, God is not your top priority. If you don't make time to read the Bible, God is not your top priority.

“You shall have no other Gods before Me”.

We live in a world that demands more and more of our time, but God still commands us to make Him our top priority.

When we do, it brings peace and joy and fulfillment and believe it or not, it helps us to accomplish more than we ever thought we could.

So take time. Make time. Rearrange your schedule. Reset your priorities until God is clearly number one in your life.

You shall have no other Gods before me.

Give invitation.