

## NO OTHER GODS

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### INTRODUCTION

The preface of the Ten Commandments is all about freedom, but it is easy to hear the words that we've heard so many times and not hear the gospel, the good news that we have only one God (Ex. 20:1-4). But it was and is radically good and wonderful news to hear that there is only one God, and He has revealed Himself in Jesus.

### THE TEXT:

Paul is dealing with Judaizers and other syncretists who want to add other things to Jesus. But when Christ is received, He is always received as Lord and not merely an assistant, and that is how Christians walk (2:6). If we are rooted in Him, then we grow up in and through faith in Him (2:7). There are always philosophical fads and theological fashions being offered to trick the simple, but this is always to deny the fullness of the divinity of Jesus (2:8-9). For Paul, the Godness of Jesus means that we are complete, not lacking anything in Him (2:10). If Jesus is God and we have been given Jesus, then we have been given everything because He is the head of all principality and power. Paul insists that everything the Judaizers think Gentiles need, they already have in the cross of Christ (2:11-14). This is how and why the principalities and powers have been disarmed and triumphed over (2:15). While we may be tempted to think that Paul has a severe case of ADD, what follows is actually directly related to Paul's point. When Paul speaks of the fullness of God in Christ, he is thinking about all of the mundane details of life, what we eat and drink and wear and watch and listen to and talk about. Every culture is full of principalities and powers: the influences, the gods and celebrities that lead the masses, politicians and judges, athletes and stars in their courses. These are the powers which either serve King Jesus or not. But we are not under them because they are under Christ, and we are seated with Him in the heavenly places (3:1-3, cf. Eph. 1:20-21, 2:5-6). And this is where we wrestle against them (Eph. 6:12). But this struggle does not primarily occur in another dimension; because we have the Spirit we bring the heavenly places with us wherever we go and this means that we must not allow others to judge us in food or drink or festivals or sabbaths (Col. 2:16). The best of those merely pointed to Christ and the worst are cheats (2:17-18). Submission to the regulations of the gods is always slavery to human regulations, 'do not touch, do not taste, do not handle...' (2:20-22) which may seem reasonable or even wise, but they do not really nourish us (2:19, 23). But we were raised with Christ, our lives are hidden with Christ in God, and therefore, we must learn to see our lives and this world, looking through heaven (3:1-3).

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This statement is not condemnation in the first instance; this is the proclamation of liberty. "For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily; and you are complete in Him." This is good news. This is good news because the gods of health food fads are under Christ. This is good news because the gods of cool are under Christ. This is good news because the gods of politics and power are under Christ. And we do not live in fear of what any of the gods think. But living under fear is slavery to some pharaoh, whether they are friends or foes. But the servants of Pharaoh will always end up acting like Pharaoh (Ps. 115:4-8). If you live in fear of what others will think about your decisions, you are living in slavery, and sooner or later you will begin to enslave others. But the one true God calls you to freedom.

This means obeying where the Lord has spoken, seeking the Lord and godly counsel, and then living like the world is ours. This doesn't guarantee a risk-free life, but we walk by faith. And we rejoice in the freedom of our brothers and sisters in Christ. We have no other gods.

## FREE TO LOVE

In the cross, Paul says that Jesus "disarmed principalities and powers and made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it." The "it" refers to the cross or Jesus on the cross, but the point is that the powers have no power and they were put to shame at the cross. This is true in at least two ways: First, in the cross the powers of this world did their very best and still failed. The political process, religious authority, violent coercion, popular opinion, even the grasp of money could not undo the cross; they merely played into the plan (1 Cor. 2:8). And second, in the crucifixion the powers were shown to be tyrants and killers, and our God was proven to be a faithful husband and friend, giving His life up for us (1 Jn. 4:10). One way to tell the story of the Exodus is the mission of God to teach Israel how to reveal Him. He comes to His own and to the Egyptians so that they may know that He is Yahweh (Ex. 5:2, 6:7, 7:5, 17, 8:22, etc.), and this revelation culminates in the Passover where blood is displayed and shed, disarming the power of Egypt. From there, God takes Israel into the wilderness to teach them how to live like Him, and at the center of that life is a bloody altar. But if Israel has learned the lesson of Passover, they know that the shed blood means freedom. And in Christ we have seen the revelation of God's love and power in a far greater way, and this equips us to love like that.



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