

SEMPER FIDELIS – ALWAYS FAITHFUL

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January 18, 2009

10 COMMANDMENTS

I am the Lord thy God, ... Thou shalt have no other gods before me.

Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven images.

Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain.

Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy.

Honor thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long.

Thou shalt not kill.

Thou shalt not commit adultery.

Thou shalt not steal.

Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor.

Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's house.

Exodus 20

⁶ I am the LORD thy God, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage.

⁷ Thou shalt have none other gods before me.

⁸ Thou shalt not make thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the waters beneath the earth:

⁹ Thou shalt not bow down thyself unto them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me,

¹⁰ And shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me and keep my commandments.

¹¹ Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy God in vain: for the LORD will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain.

¹² Keep the sabbath day to sanctify it, as the LORD thy God hath commanded thee.

¹³ Six days thou shalt labour, and do all thy work:

¹⁴ But the seventh day is the sabbath of the LORD thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, nor thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thine ox, nor thine ass, nor any of thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates; that thy manservant and thy maidservant may rest as well as thou.

¹⁵ And remember that thou wast a servant in the land of Egypt, and that the LORD thy God brought thee out thence through a mighty hand and by a stretched out arm: therefore the LORD thy God commanded thee to keep the sabbath day.

¹⁶ Honour thy father and thy mother, as the LORD thy God hath commanded thee; that thy days may be prolonged, and that it may go well with thee, in the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee.

¹⁷ Thou shalt not kill.

¹⁸ Neither shalt thou commit adultery.

¹⁹ Neither shalt thou steal.

²⁰ Neither shalt thou bear false witness against thy neighbour.

²¹ Neither shalt thou desire thy neighbour's wife, neither shalt thou covet thy neighbour's house, his field, or his manservant, or his maidservant, his ox, or his ass, or any thing that is thy neighbour's

SEMPER FIDELIS – ALWAYS FAITHFUL

In Matthew 22, Jesus was confronted by an expert of Mosaic Law, an expert in the Torah, who asked Him, “Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?” Jesus responded by quoting the Shema, “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind and with all thy strength.” Jesus continued, “And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.” The questioner was so astounded by Jesus’ answer that he agreed with Jesus to the point that Jesus said to him, “You are not far from the Kingdom of God.”

Jesus knew that these two statements contained all the 10 Commandments, or the Ten Words, so treasured by the Jews. Since Jesus gave a positive spin of the 10, I want to do the same in a series on the 10 Commandments. The first 4 commandments are for Love of God; the last 6 commandments are for the Love of Neighbor.

Let’s look at these Words one by one, starting with the first, which I have labeled *Semper Fidelis, Always Faithful*. Ex. 20:6, 7: “I am the Lord thy God, which brought thee out of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.” “Thou shalt have none other gods before me.”

The Marine motto is a wonderful motto—Always Faithful! Indeed they have been at the forefront of the wars our nation has fought, with a unity and a strength hardly found in any fighting force of any nation. Always Faithful! As His warriors, God commanded this of Israel; as His warriors, God commands that of every Christian. Why does He command faithfulness of us? He can do that because He has been faithful to His people.

You see, God had made a covenant with His people, and even if they were unfaithful, He would be faithful. Listen:

GE 12:1 The LORD had said to Abram,
"Leave your country, your people
and your father's household and go
to the land I will show you.

GE 12:2 "I will make you into a great
nation, and I will bless you; I will
make your name great, and you will
be a blessing.

GE 12:3 I will bless those who bless
you, and whoever curses you I will
curse; and all peoples on earth will
be blessed through you.

God confirmed that covenant with the Patriarchs, and when Joseph went down to Egypt, himself in bondage, he went there to save Israel from starvation. He himself said to his brothers,

“It was not you, but God.” Later there arose a Pharaoh who knew not Joseph, and the children of Israel were made the slaves of Egypt. Then God called Moses, and covenanted with him to set His people free. God was Always Faithful; God is Always Faithful!

I. WE ARE TO BE FAITHFUL BECAUSE THE LORD OUR GOD IS ALWAYS FAITHFUL.

A. THE LORD GOD SAVED ISRAEL FROM THE LAND OF EGYPT. God’s people were strangers in a strange land. They prospered in Egypt in the land of Goshen, and they probably forgot that this was not their land. God had given them another land, a land that was also given to Abraham. Just as they were in Babylon many years later, they were exiles, and at ease in their exile.

This is a good lesson for us. If we are not where God wants us to be, we are exiles, and the Lord God will not allow us to live out of His will. God will not let us stay in our Egypt. You see, the Egyptians will rise up against us, and try to destroy us. When we backslide, we know that we are not of this world, and we know that ‘the world passeth away and the lust thereof, but they that doeth the will of God abideth forever.’”

God allows the crisis to come so that we will repent and come out of the world, out of Egypt, out of Babylon. Perhaps God is allowing the economic crisis, and the terrorist crisis, and the war crisis, to bring America back to Himself.

God is faithful: He brought Israel out of Egypt. He brought them out with 10 plagues that came upon Egypt. He brought them out with frogs, rivers of blood, disease on their animals, boils, hail and fire, locusts, lice, flies, gnats, and finally the death of the firstborn. The Egyptians begged the Jews to leave Egypt, and even gave them their valuables to leave. Then, when they had gone, Pharaoh changed his mind and sent his armies to destroy them. With the armies of Egypt sweeping down at them, and with the Red Sea in front of them, the Israelites despaired of life. Moses commanded, “Stand still and see the salvation of God.” The sea opened and they crossed, and the armies of Egypt were drowned, swallowed by an angry sea.

B. GOD WAS ALWAYS FAITHFUL IN SAVING THEM, AND DELIVERING THEM OUT OF EGYPT. GOD WAS ALSO ALWAYS FAITHFUL IN DELIVERING THEM FROM SLAVERY. God hates slavery! He freed Israel! God hated American slavery! He freed the black Americans! Can you imagine the tragedy and the sadness of the Israelites as they were forced to make brick without straw. Not only were they reduced to slavery, they were punished in their slavery. Many were killed. Others despaired of life. But it was the Faithful God at work calling a Deliverer named Moses, raised in the house of Pharaoh, educated in the most elite setting, and given all the pleasures one could want in the land of that day. But God allowed the slavery that the people were facing. He allowed it so that they would want to be free, want to be unfettered, want to become complete individuals. God who hates slavery hates our sins.

God also hates our slavery to sin. ^{Gal 3 11} Clearly no one is justified before God by the law, because, "The righteous will live by faith." ¹² The law is not based on faith; on the contrary, "The man who does these things will live by them." ¹³ Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written: "Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree." ¹⁴

He redeemed us in order that the blessing given to Abraham might come to the Gentiles through Christ Jesus, so that by faith we might receive the promise of the Spirit.

Since we have also been saved by faith and have entered the covenant of Abraham, and have the same Always Faithful Lord God, God wants to give us the Freedom to become the Sons of God. Paul says in Galatians, ^{GAL 3:21} Is the law, therefore, opposed to the promises of God? Absolutely not! For if a law had been given that could impart life, then righteousness would certainly have come by the law. ²² But the Scripture declares that the whole world is a prisoner of sin, so that what was promised, being given through faith in Jesus Christ, might be given to those who believe.

God is always Faithful!

II. GOD, ALWAYS FAITHFUL, ASKS FROM US SEMPER FIDELIS.

A. WHEN ALWAYS FAITHFUL WE WILL HAVE NO OTHER GOD'S BEFORE HIM. The Bible tells us that “our God is a jealous God.” This simply means that God desires that we worship Him alone, since He alone is God. You see, we cannot be right with ourselves unless we are right with Him who created us, who brought us out of the hostile setting we were in, who saved us from our slavery to sin.

In Egypt there were many gods. Polytheism ruled. That was bad enough. We find too that when Moses went up to the Mountain of God to receive these commandments, he stayed so long that the Israelites started making the gods of Egypt and worshipping them. God knew what would happen. But He commanded them to be Always Faithful even though He knew they would not.

Then when they entered the promised land, the Jews knew the commandments, they knew that God expected them to be Faithful to Him, they knew that they were to keep the Covenant made with Noah, Adam, Abraham, Moses, and later with David, they knew, they knew, that they were to be faithful, and yet they went astray after other gods. The Prophets of Israel accused them of spiritual adultery. At times God would bring judgment upon them; at times He allowed the judgment of their own lifestyles to come upon them. “Ephraim is joined to his idols, let him alone.” Throughout the Book of Judges the children of Israel would sin, then judgment would come upon them by conquerors who would destroy them. Then they would repent and pray and God would send a Gideon, or a Barak, or another to deliver them.

B. WE ARE ALWAYS FAITHFUL WHEN WE WORSHIP THE LORD OUR GOD IN SPIRIT AND IN TRUTH. There are many ‘false gods’ in our world today. In educational circles there are the false gods of intelligence and the false gods of science. Men put the human mind on a pedestal and bow down before it and worship it. A friend of mine told me once that he had no choice but to follow logic and reason. He said, “If there is a God then I am certain He will accept me if I do the best I can with my own intelligence.” The problem with that false god is that there is no such thing as infallible logic or infallible intelligence.

As the poet said,

“Our knowledge is a torch of smoky pine,
That lights the pathway but one step ahead
Across the voice of mystery and dread.
Bid then the tender light of faith to shine,
By which alone the mortal thought is led

Unto the thinking of the thought Divine.”

Have as much knowledge as you can; be as intelligent as you can; be as logical as you can be; but don't use reason, knowledge, logic, and intelligence as false gods that lead you away from the Living and True God. Semper Fidelis to the God who is always faithful.

Besides knowledge there is the false gods of human achievement. I love that idea that we can do all things, but I love it because Paul said that it is achieved through Christ. Achievement is a gift of God the Lord. Tim Tebow, the Florida quarterback, so eloquently said, “God gave me this ability and He could just as easily take it away from me.”

I was amazed at the interviews done with the airbus that crash-landed in the Hudson River. The news media were praising the firefighters, praising the coast guard, praising the rescue teams with boats and helicopters, and especially praising the pilot of the aircraft. I do appreciate their achievement, and I do want such first responders as they were if I were in a plane crash. In fact, if someone operates on me, I want a physician, a surgeon, with a track record for achievement. However, I will not praise them if I get well; I will praise God! I suspect that the pilot of that airliner thanked God. I suspect that the people aboard that plane thanked God. Had God allowed it, the entire crew and all the passengers would have perished in that crash. Let us be Always Faithful in giving credit to the Lord our God.

Then, there are the false gods of power, pride, and possessions. The last temptation that Satan hurled at Jesus was “the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them.” And what was Jesus to do? He was to fall down and worship Satan. I am afraid that too many Americans have been worshipping Satan. Actually here's the rub. When you worship false gods you are worshipping Satan, whether you know it or not. To worship a lie is to worship the father of lies. To worship false gods is to worship the false which is Satan and evil.

Someone wisely said, “We must not sacrifice the eternal on the altar of the temporal.” But so many do. We must be Christian Marines—Always Faithful!