

The Ten Commandments - Part 1

Exodus 20:1-18

8/30/08

Intro

At this point in our study Israel has come to the wilderness of Sinai and specifically, Mt. Sinai. It is at Mt. Sinai that God gives the Ten Commandments to Israel.

He begins in verse two by saying, “I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.” He loved them by delivering them out of the bondage of slavery, and now he is giving them rules, principals, and laws to guide their lives.

What was the purpose of the law? Clearly we see that it was for their benefit. In fact, the Apostle Paul said that the Law is good. He also goes on to say that it is also a schoolmaster that leads us to Christ.

Of course we understand from the New Testament that we are under grace, not under Law. But that does not mean that God does not want us to live in a way that is holy, or in a way that does not please Him. Jesus said, “I did not come to abolish the law, but to fulfill the law. Not one jot or tittle shall pass away until all is accomplished.”

The Law describes the righteousness of God. It tells us His heart for us in protecting us from those things which are harmful to our lives. The Law has not passed away; it has been superseded by the law of the Spirit of Christ.

Illus – Flying Aeroflot, I was worried whether the plane would actually make it off the runway. The law of gravity will always be in place, but it has been superseded by the Law of aerodynamics.

Today we look at the first four of the Ten Commandments. The Ten Commandments can be divided into two groups, the first having to do with our relationship to God, and the last six having to do with our relationship to others.

I. Love the Lord with All Your Heart

- When Jesus was asked the greatest commandment of the Law, he responded, “Love the Lord your God with all your heart, and soul, mind, and strength.” He also said that the second is like it, “Love your neighbor as yourself.”
- On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets. In other words, the whole of the Old Testament can be summarized on those two commandments.
- The 10 commandments can be summarized as well in the same way. We begin with the first commandment.

A. “Have no other gods before Me”

- When God first gave these commandments to Israel, He spoke directly to them as they stood at the foot of the mountain. This would have been an amazing and personal experience for every one of the Hebrews as they heard the voice of God for themselves.
- Was God trying to intimidate them? Not at all, He was speaking personally to them. He was the One who had carried them on eagles wings.
- Did God have an ego problem? Not at all.
- God knew that there would be terrible consequences for having anything as a god other than Jehovah.
- This was true for three main reasons:

- **There is no other god who is worth worshipping.** None of the foreign gods created the universe. No other god owns heaven.
- **We become like that which we worship.** This would be true regardless of which god someone chose.

Illus- We have a lot of fun associating ourselves with our favorite football team, but you could see how it could easily become an obsession. You wear the hat, the jersey, the jacket, you know all the players statistics. The next thing you know you paint your chest with the team colors, and even spend Sundays with the team. The next thing you know you end up saying something ridiculous like, “I’m a Beaver.”

- While that may be humorous, in reality, we do become like that which we love; like that of which we place our affections and desires.
- Paul wrote to Timothy that this would be a condition of the last days.

II Timothy 3:1-5 Avoid such men as these

- But when we worship God, we become like Him; His thoughts and His character become ours.
- **Because they are cruel masters.** God said, “I am the Lord who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.” They had already been under cruel masters and God set them free and desired to give them great blessings in their lives.

- God is the One who would love them, but other gods would only destroy and harm them.

Illus – The god of sexuality becomes a terrible master and will destroy your life. But God will bless your marriage in marvelous ways. The god of drugs will destroy everything as will the god of alcoholism.

B. Don't have any idols in your life

- The problem is not having a decoration piece on your living room table; the problem is having something in your life that takes the place of God.
- There were many in that day that created idols, a relic, or an image to worship. But they believed the thing had power unto itself.

Illus – When I was in high school, I have to admit that to some degree my car became a bit of an idol to me. I thought it had power unto itself to make the girls like me. Never mind the fact that my hair was a bushy mess and that I looked like a hokey farm boy.

- Some could even say that an image represents God, but the problem is that it will falsely represent Him.

Illus – If Jordi took my picture and laid it on the pillow and kissed it good night and placed her affection on the picture, and told the children that this was their father, there would be something terribly wrong.

Illus – When the boys left Russia they were given an orthodox icon to protect them, but it had no power.

Some kiss a crucifix in the belief that it has power over Satan. But the crucifix itself doesn't fully represent what Christ did for us on the cross.

- The soul was made for God alone and anything that tries to take His place is an idol.
- Paul wrote to the church at Rome about those who made an image in the form of corruptible man.

Romans 1:22-23, Professing to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for an image in the form of corruptible man and of birds and four-footed animals and crawling creatures.

- The problem here again is that people become like the idol they create. In Psalm 115 the writer speaks about idols that have eyes but cannot see, ears, but cannot hear, and mouths, but cannot speak. And that...

Psalm 115:8, Those who make them will become like them, everyone who trusts in them.

Illus – We don't have such idols today, we have the Internet. Enough said.

II. Honor the Lord Whom You Love

- If we love the Lord with our heart, soul, mind and strength, then it also follows that we should honor him with our lives.
- That's what the next two commandments are all about, that loving God brings changes in our lives that reflect His glory and His presence.

A. Do not take the name of the Lord in vain

- The name of God means something powerful.
- I love that worship song that says, “Your name is like honey on my lips...”
- When Moses stood before the burning bush and asked God His name, God gave him the name Jehovah, or Yahweh. It was a name that contained the power of His presence and the heart that He had for the people of Israel.
- How tragic and dishonoring then to use God’s name as an expletive. Why do people do that?
- Notice that when people hit their thumbs with a hammer, they don’t say, ‘Oh Buddha’, or ‘Oh Hare Krishna!’
- Because their souls are bothered by God’s name. They aren’t right with God and they know it so they try to make the name common, to keep it under their heel.
- The Lord is drawing us to Himself (**Exodus 19:4-6**), and making us His possession and in the process He is cleaning up our lives.

Illus – Their garments would stink from being in the wilderness and they were to clean them. Our lives stink as well and then God starts to clean up our lives and allow us to honor Him.

Illus – We used to associate such words to sailors, but now you can hear these words in hallways of schools throughout the country.

Illus – My son joined the Marines and started picking a few of these words. We become like those we hang with.

General George Washington wrote a letter to his officers because he heard that the soldiers were taking on the habit of swearing.

- Our mouth cleans up as our heart cleans up because they are both connected.

Luke 6:45, “The good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth what is good; and the evil man out of the evil treasure brings forth what is evil; for his mouth speaks from that which fills his heart.”

- But there is power in the name of Jesus.

Romans 10:13, for “Whoever will call on the name of the Lord will be saved.”

- **The name of the Lord is to be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace.**

B. Remember the Sabbath – our rest

- God explains that in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth and on the seventh day he rested. That becomes the basis for the Sabbath day.
- It is to be sign between a Jew and His God and was intended as something that would help them both physically and spiritually.

- It was never intended to become a burden, but that is exactly what it became. In fact, some of the interpretations of the Sabbath laws became so extreme that they were a bit humorous.

Illus – The Mishna, a Jewish book that interprets the Law, said that there 39 ways to break the Sabbath and 39 ways to break each of those 39 ways. In other words, there were 1,521 ways to break the Sabbath.

You can't bathe – though later it was said you could bathe if you used liquid soap. This is so you didn't carry anything.

You can't kill a flea – that's hunting.

You can't carry a pen – that's carrying a load.

Women can't look in a mirror – they might pull a grey hair – that's harvesting.

You can't spit on the ground; it might make a furrow – that's plowing.

If your house caught fire – you couldn't put it out.

Today there are Sabbath elevators that stop at every floor so no one has to push a button. You can't turn on a light switch. Some even say you can't drive because that is kindling a fire.

- It was never intended to be a burden, but became a day of condemnation.

Mark 2:27, "Jesus said to them, "The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath."

- It is to be a picture of Christ and the rest that we should have in Him, both because of our trust in Him and in the rest that He brings to our soul.

Matthew 11:28, "Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest."