

## The Commandments No One Could Keep

Exodus 20

Rev. Wm. A. Huegel

Wallingford FBC

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Theme: Praise God for His law. It shows us our need for grace.

*Exodus 20:1-21*

One of the great moments of our Judaic/Christian heritage is the story of God giving to Moses the Ten Commandments, followed by many other commandments, rules and regulations.

The question is this:

- a. **If God were not to destroy the world** with a flood again; and
- b. if the world was **continuing to spiral down-hill**; and
- c. if God was to **chose a special people** through whom the world would be blessed in that they could come to know God through these people; then
- d. **in what way would God reveal to them what He expected of people?**

The answer came through the giving of the Ten Commandments and all the laws that followed.

The 10 commandments are these:

1. *I am the Lord your God who brought you out of Egypt.* (Which is something like “I am your mother who brought you into this world and I say so! So don’t argue with me”.)
2. *You shall not have any other gods before me,* no idols, don’t bow down to anything else. Don’t be worshipping the **trees**. Don’t be creating stuff out of **wood**, stone, or **metal** and somehow think that’s worthy of your worship. Don’t be worshipping the **sun**, **moon** or **stars**. And, don’t be worshipping the **stars of Hollywood** or the **stars of Sports Illustrated**. Don’t be worshipping your own **body** (or anyone else’s)!
3. *Don’t misuse the name of God.* Don’t take His name in vain! Don’t throw around the word God like it was a football or a piece of trash that has no value. Don’t be saying “Oh God this... and Oh “Jesus Christ” when you are trying to make a strong point! Don’t do it, because His name is holy! The name of God has power. Don’t cheapen it.
4. *Remember the Sabbath Day to keep it holy.* Set aside the Sabbath to worship, to rest and to honor God. I have an idea! Let’s have a rule that we can only work 6 days a week and that we take off a day like Sunday. Let’s say we all go to church as a family in the morning. If you don’t have a family, that’s fine, we will provide one for you – us! It will be like we are all one big family. Then we spend a couple of hours or so focusing on God’s word, worshipping, singing together, praying together,

telling God how much we love Him, and learning more about what God really expects of us.

Let's have a time of wonderful fellowship. We can have some lunch together. Let's sit around and talk to people who share your faith and who are like a family to you. Be sure to check in with some people that you didn't get a chance to talk to last week. Be sure to make each child feel really special so they will absolutely love coming to church.

In fact, let's set aside some time for our teens and those becoming teens. Let's make it both a really fun time and a time when they learn some important things about themselves and about God. They will learn how important it is to put Godly values into their lives and really live by them, because kids all around them might not do that.

And, everyone once in awhile, let's have a special study in the afternoon for adults who might be wrestling with some questions or some issues and who want more time to talk, to share, and to learn. During the evening let's schedule some family time where Mom and Dad, Grandparents, some folks from the church family, or whoever might be important to the family might play some games together or watch a really wholesome family movie. In the summer, maybe they will toss a ball around in the back yard.

Let's make Sunday, a really, really special day – so special that the kids will go off to school on Monday, and Mom and Dad will go to work or whatever they have to do on Monday, smiling about what a special day Sunday was. Oh, I know, some people think Saturday is the right day for that – but I have no quarrel. I'm not a Sabbatarian – a worshipper on Seventh Day because Jesus rose from the dead on the first day of the week, and I want to celebrate that every week. The important thing is that a special day be set aside just to worship, to learn about spiritual issues, for fellowship, and for family.

I think it's such a good idea that anybody would think that my idea came directly from God! And it did! *Remember the Sabbath Day to keep it holy.* What a precious gift of God! Why on earth do we blow it by working around the house or improving our game of golf while our other relationships with family, important people, and God perish?

5. *Honor your parents.* Why? Because they are your parents; because, they brought you into this world and took or are taking responsibility for you; because, if you don't honor your parents, you won't honor any other authority, either.

An atheist once spoke to a Jewish Rabbi and said, "I admire how your children respect you. Mine don't respect me." The Rabbi said, "Think about it. For my children I am one step to a chain of tradition in which God spoke to the whole Jewish people on Mt. Sinai. For your children, you are one step closer to being an ape." In the Christian/Judaic tradition, your parents are a step closer to the moment when God spoke. That's a far cry from the sentiments of a bumper sticker that says, "Be nice to your parents, they haven't written their will yet." Honor your parents. In so doing, you honor God. He will bless you. You will live longer on the earth, if you do.

6. *Do not Murder.* (It's **not** do not kill – it's do not murder!) Murder is the unauthorized taking of someone's life. Capitol punishment is the taking of someone's life as a consequence for some terrible crime, through the God-ordained system of government. No matter what you think about capitol punishment, this commandment doesn't speak to it. This commandment is about murder – the disrespectful taking of another person's life by an individual who has set himself up as an authority as to who should and who shouldn't live out of his own sense of anger or whatever.

7. *Do not commit adultery.* Keep to your own wife, your own husband, and don't go after someone else's. (And, by the way, sexual relationships before marriage obligate the man to marry the woman Duet. 22:28, 29). In the Bible adultery has come to symbolize “broken faith” between two people and between people and God.

8. *Do not steal.* Don't take that which you haven't earned through your own hard work. (Which includes walking out of the store with an item the cashier forgot to charge you. Integrity matters more than stuff. Guard your integrity. Don't steal.)

9. *Do not bear false witness.* Lying. This law pertains particularly to lying in a court of law – which we would call perjury. It's very serious. The idea of justice is a mere joke if justice is not really just. That can only happen in a situation of people telling the truth. While this commandment has to do with lying in court, there are huge implications about our being people of integrity. People need to be able to trust us as people of God. We need to trust one another. It can only happen if we are truth-tellers. Jesus says, “Let your ‘yes’ be ‘yes’ and your ‘no’ be ‘no’!” Mean what you say and say what you mean.

10. *Do not covet anything!* Don't want anything that belongs to someone else, including their spouse and/or things that do not belong to you. And why would you? Jesus said, “*A man's life does not consist in the abundance of a man's possessions.*” There was a show on TV in which several people who had won million dollar lotteries were interviewed. The interviewer asked: “How many of you are happier today?” Not a single hand was raised. One winner replied: “How many new suits can you buy? How many cars can you drive? Every time you buy something nice, you want something even nicer.” There is no correlation between wealth and happiness. Even when things were hard the Apostle Paul said, “*In all circumstances, I have learned therein to be content.*” Do not covet.

So, 1 worship God, 2 avoid idols, 3 keep the Sabbath, 4 honor parents, 5 don't murder, 6 steal, 7 lie, 8 covet or 9 commit adultery and you're all set, right? You're good.

Well, of course these are followed by a few other laws, rules, and regulations (613 in all!). Do all of those and you're good, right? Yes, maybe, except for one small problem. None of us keep all those laws.

Just the 10 commandments are hard enough to follow. For example, when the laws says you shall **have no other gods or idols**, one wonders if that includes things that we tend to prioritize – things that become more important than our relationship to God. **Things**

**like cars, sports, houses, and clothes. If you spend more money on new clothes for yourself than you do in relieving the suffering of the poor and supporting the work of the Gospel in foreign countries, are you making an idol of it? I wonder!** If you spend more **money on vacations than you spend on giving Bibles** to those who cannot get one, what's most important to you? I wonder about things like that.

Jesus talks about the 10 commandments and reminds us that if these things are in our hearts to do, it doesn't really matter that you haven't actually carried them out. You have committed them in your heart – things like adultery. *Jesus said if you look at a woman to lust after her, you have committed adultery in your heart. If you harbor hatred in your heart toward someone, you've murdered him/her.* If you long to have what someone else has, you've already stolen from him/her.

The Apostle Paul says no one has ever kept the law sufficiently. He should know. He was once a Pharisee who sought to keep every jot and title of the law. He later admitted that he was the chief of sinners.

Romans 3: *"There is no one righteous, not even one;*

*11 there is no one who understands,  
no one who seeks God.*

*12 All have turned away,  
they have together become worthless;  
there is no one who does good,  
not even one."<sup>[c]</sup>*

*13 "Their throats are open graves;  
their tongues practice deceit."<sup>[d]</sup>*

*"The poison of vipers is on their lips."<sup>[e]</sup>*

*14 "Their mouths are full of cursing and bitterness."<sup>[f]</sup>*

*15 "Their feet are swift to shed blood;*

*16 ruin and misery mark their ways,*

*17 and the way of peace they do not know."<sup>[g]</sup>*

*18 "There is no fear of God before their eyes."*

Paul insists we have all sinned and have not even come close to anything that would bring glory to God. None of us have gained righteousness by perfectly keeping the law. We have only found righteousness by trusting in Christ.

*Romans 5: 6 You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. 7 Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous man, though for a good man someone might possibly dare to die. 8 But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. 9 Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him!*

So, is the Law of Moses important to us? Paul in Romans says yes, it is very important. The Law (The Ten Commandments) teaches us and leads us to

Christ.

*Gal. 3:24 So the **law** was put in charge to lead us to Christ that we might be justified by faith.*

We are all in such need of God's grace! Let us trust in Him!

Amen!