

YEAR OF THE MESSAGE: Moses
Law and Order: Divine Intent
The Decalogue: Two Tablets for Every Day
Exodus 20

Intro: The Ten Commandments are a foundation for any civil society. They require humility toward God and our fellow man. They teach restraint, love, and unselfish service. They are echoed in all legal codes that under gird the societies and cultures of our world.

God's law reveals a lot about who he is and a lot about who we are. Nothing is so revealing as seeing your own reflection in the moral law of God.

The Law of God is an Expression of his GRACE. Grace is the "unearned favor of God." God has shown this wonderful grace in bringing the Hebrews slaves out of Egypt.

The Covenant requires Grace from God because he is not under obligation or in debt to any human being. He is not compelled to make this covenant with the Hebrews. God is much greater than the Hebrew nation. This covenant involves a great one who stoops down to help a smaller one. They are not equals in the covenant as with the marriage ceremony. Instead, this is an unequal covenant in which God extends his favor to the Hebrews despite their status as a small, even obscure, and enslaved people.

The Covenant expresses the Grace of God in that it constitutes a revelation of his character. God is pulling aside the mystery of his own person to communicate these truths to humans. This self-disclosure is an act of God's freedom and thus of his grace. We do not force a revelation from the Almighty. He bestows, permits, and initiates any revelation of his nature which we might receive.

God gives the law knowing that not one single Hebrew can fully keep this law in his heart and being. Every Hebrew man and woman, boy and girl, will fail to fully comprehend and adhere to this law which describes the character of God.

The law as grace means that we have a false dichotomy in our minds about the nature of faith in Christ and about the character of God. We should not think that grace and law are in tension. We should see that they are in perfect harmony and that they work together to achieve the purposes and express the character of God.

I. Keep These Commands to Express Your Love, Submission, and Wisdom.

These commands are a part of a larger picture. They are given in the context of God's mighty deliverance. They introduce the Book of the Covenant (20-23).

A. The love of God for his people.

1. The love of God for Israel is manifest in the Exodus from Egypt, the parting of the Red Sea, and the deliverance of the slave people from their oppressors. This historical event is the context of the giving of the law (see v2).

2. The love of God incontestable. It cannot be refuted given the truth of the Exodus. No Hebrew should ever doubt the love of God for his fathers or for his people.

3. The love of God is jealous love. He wants not competition in the hearts of the Hebrews for his supreme place in their devotion.

B. The faith of Israel in God is a response to his love.

1. They have learned that God hears their prayers.
2. They have learned that God is concerned about them.
3. They have learned that God is powerful.
4. They have learned that God can be trusted.

C. These laws express our hearts to God:

1. Our allegiance to God as Savior
2. Our submission to God alone as Lord
3. Our wisdom in following God

D. Love and Faith are essential dimensions of the Covenant with God then and now. As part of the New Covenant, we enter into covenant with God in “the new and living way,” through the death of Christ upon the cross and his resurrection from the dead.

II. Keep These Commands to Live Together in Peace

A. These laws identify your most likely points of departure from the character of God and the purpose for which you are living on the planet.

B. They speak to great sins of PRIDE, GREED, and SLOTH in very practical and daily applications:

1. Pride is addressed in all of the commands but especially the commands concerning our love for and submission to God.
2. Greed is addressed in the last five commands but especially in the last one—no coveting.
3. Sloth is addressed in all of the commands in that they insist on a well-ordered life lived for a lofty purpose and devoted to the God of love.

III. Keep These Commands to Achieve Your Highest Purpose in this life

A. These commands are eagle’s feathers. Together they allow you to fly. “I carried you on eagle’s wings and brought you to myself.”

B. These commands help you fly by fostering strong relationships with God and people.

1. They are divided into two tablets with the fifth being found sometimes in the first and sometimes in the second.
2. They first address your relationship with God. They forbid graven images. They hallow his name. They set apart the Sabbath. They insist on honoring parents.
3. They second tablet addresses our relationships with our neighbor: no killing, no adultery, no stealing, no lying, no coveting.
4. The first, “no other gods,” is restated in Deuteronomy 6:5 in this way, “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength.” Jesus will quote this verse to identify the Great Commandment.
5. The second, “no coveting” of “anything that belongs to your neighbor” is restated in this way in Leviticus 19:18: “love your neighbor as yourself.” Jesus quoted this verse as the Second Commandment which is like

unto the first. Concerning the perennial question, "Who is my neighbor," Jesus gave the answer of the Parable of the Good Samaritan.

IV. Keep These Commands By Receiving Christ as Savior and Lord.

A. We are all sinners. You and I cannot keep these commandments. God tells the Hebrews this, and he tells us.

B. God sent the Promised One, already mentioned in the first chapters of the Bible, to save us from our sins and to bring us into a grace relationship with him.

C. Your relationship with God is secured as you trust in Christ and in the work done by him in his life and death for us.

CONCLUSION: Invitation to trust in Christ alone for salvation.