

Exodus 20:1-17

Psalm 19

1 Corinthians 1:18-25

John 2:13-22

AND GOD SPOKE ALL THESE WORDS



Today we will discuss three functions of the Law: (1) The Law reveals our sin, (2) the Law leads us to Jesus Christ, and (3) the Law tells us how to live after we have received Christ as our Lord and Savior.

Ex 20:1-17. *And God spoke all these words, saying, ²"I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.*

³*"You shall have no other gods before me.*

⁴*"You shall not make for yourself a graven image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth; ⁵you shall not bow down to them or serve them; for I the Lord your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and the fourth generation of those who hate me, ⁶but showing steadfast love to thousands of those who love me and keep my commandments.*

⁷*"You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain; for the Lord will not hold him guiltless who takes his name in vain.*

⁸*"Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. ⁹Six days you shall labor, and do all your work; ¹⁰but the seventh day is a sabbath to the Lord your God; in it you shall not do any work, you, or your son, or your daughter, your manservant, or your maidservant, or your cattle, or the sojourner who is within your gates; ¹¹for in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day; therefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day and hallowed it.*

¹²*"Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long in the land which the Lord your God gives you.*

¹³*"You shall not kill.*

¹⁴*"You shall not commit adultery.*

¹⁵*"You shall not steal.*

¹⁶*"You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.*

¹⁷*"You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or his manservant, or his maidservant, or his ox, or his ass, or anything that is your neighbor's."¹*

- *"I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage"* (v.1). The law is not something you must obey in order to gain God's approval. God first took Israel out of bondage, *then* gave the law. In the same way, a person is first saved from the bondage of sin by God's power and grace, *then* he or she becomes free to follow the law and walk in obedience to God.

- *God spoke all these words* (v.1). The laws of God are absolute, not comparative or relative. They are meant to govern our behavior and not be modified because customs have changed. Even the Son of God said, *"Think not that I have come to abolish the law and the prophets; I have come not to abolish them but to fulfill them."* (Matt 5:17). Discuss these additional points with regard to the Ten Commandments:

- Jesus summarized the law by saying, *"You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And the second is like it, You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments depend all the law and the prophets."* (Mt 22:34-40). Read Mark 12:28-34, where the scribe agreed with Jesus and said, *"You are right, Teacher; you have truly said that he is one ..."* Discuss how these two commandments of Jesus embrace all the law.

¹ Bible quotations are from the RSV.

- Things in nature – stars, oceans, atoms, etc. – obey immutable laws, like the laws of gravity and thermodynamics. These “laws of nature” also govern living things – plants and animals. Man, made in the image of God, is subject to these laws without choice. But man alone is in possession of the Ten Commandments. We are also subject to them, but *not* without choice. We may choose to disobey.
- Small children are kept safe by rules and discipline. Parents can see hidden dangers and set boundaries to keep the children safe. Sometimes the boundaries work the other way as well. They keep the world safe from, as well as for, the children. Discuss the application of this idea to your relationship with your Father in heaven, with regard to natural laws as well as the Ten Commandments.
- In other words, God gave the Ten Commandments because he loves you as a good father loves his child. He made the rules to keep you out of harm’s way, as the rules we make for our own children are meant to keep them out of danger. The law was not given as a test to select “good” people, nor was the law given to allow men to earn justification and acceptance from God. It was the result of God’s love, not his anger.
God said, “*I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage*” (v.2). His intention was for men to be *made free* by the law, not bound by it. God also said, “*Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long*” (v.12). His intention is not for our days to be cut short on account of the law, but that our lives may be lengthened through obedience to it.
- Righteous Jews have always known these things, and have delighted in the law. Many of the psalms tell how the Israelites loved the law and sought to understand and keep it: “*Make me to know thy ways, O Lord teach me thy paths ...*” (Ps 25:4). “*Oh, how I love thy law! It is my meditation all the day ...*” (Ps 119:97). Are you able to appreciate and even love the law? Discuss the following verses in our psalm today:

Psalm 19:7-11. *The law of the Lord is perfect, reviving the soul; the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple; ⁸the precepts of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes; ⁹the fear of the Lord is clean, enduring forever; the ordinances of the Lord are true, and righteous altogether. ¹⁰More to be desired are they than gold, even much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and drippings of the honeycomb. ¹¹Moreover by them is thy servant warned; in keeping them there is great reward.*

- *The law of the Lord is perfect* (v.7). Just as God's natural law is perfect for the universe, so the Ten Commandments are perfect for the human race. My lawnmower came with the manufacturer’s handbook. Its instructions are not optional. If I don’t follow them, the machine won’t work properly and may become damaged and even dangerous. Gas mowers are not fail-safe, and neither is the human race.

The Bible is our Manufacturer’s Handbook. When men don’t follow its instructions, we, like lawn mowers, also don’t work properly and may become damaged and even dangerous. God uses Bible passages, especially the Ten Commandments, to keep us on the road of life in Jesus Christ.

How does the law *revive the soul* (v.7)? How does it *make simple people wise* (v.7)? How is the law *right and pure* (v.8)? How does the law *enlighten the eyes* (v.8)? Read Romans 3:19-20 which concludes, “*Through the law comes knowledge of sin*” How can something as restrictive and condemning as the law, which pronounces me guilty, be *more to be desired than fine gold, and sweeter also than honey* (v.10)?

Christ came and died for our sins because, although you and I agree with and may even love God’s law, we do not obey it. Thus, instead of making us what we should be, the law sheds light on what we are. Read Romans 7:7-13, which begins, “*What then shall we say? That the law is sin? By no means! Yet, if it had not been for the law, I should not have known sin ...*”

The law ends not in making people righteous, but in providing evidence of our need for forgiveness and redemption. You and I are justified not in obedience to the law, but by faith in what Jesus Christ has done on the cross to save us from our disobedience.

Jesus did not come to abolish the law or change even the least part of it. Of all men, he alone was above the law until he put himself under it. Throughout his life, his obedience to the law was perfect. Believers can see how the law is good medicine for the human race. We have all failed to obey it, but we cherish the promise that in Christ our hearts will become inclined to obedience. Let us remember to pray always, and especially in this season of Lent: “*Lord, have mercy on me, and incline my heart to keep this law.*”