

THE TEN COMMANDMENTS (7)

Exodus 20:1-17

Key Verses: 20:2,3

"I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. You shall have no other gods before me."

As we have studied, the book of Exodus teaches us the hope of God. God redeemed his people Israel from slavery in Egypt and carried them on eagles wings and brought them to himself at Mount Sinai. At Mount Sinai God revealed his great hope for them. To God, this nation of slaves was his treasured possession. He wanted to raise them as a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. So he gave them the law. The core of the law is the Ten Commandments. Today we want to study the Ten Commandments. The Ten Commandments can be divided into two parts: The first part, verses 3-11, teaches us that we must love God. The second part, verses 12-17, teaches us that we must love people. We are living in lawless times with a declining moral standard. May God write these Ten Commandments on the tablets of our hearts.

I. Love the Lord your God (1-11)

Verses 1 and 2 say, "And God spoke all these words: 'I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery.'" What does it mean that God is the Lord their God? It means that God is the Creator of the heavens and the earth. Our God is the Almighty God. What did this Almighty God do for the Israelites who were in bondage as slaves in Egypt? God showed his love by liberating them from slavery in Egypt through Moses. In the Bible the words, "I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery," are repeated innumerable times in order to emphasize that God is the God of grace who delivered them out of slavery. The people of Israel had suffered unbearably under Pharaoh king of Egypt, who used them ruthlessly, even ordering the death of all boy babies. But after 430 years God delivered them through Moses his servant. This was God's grace. Not only the people of Israel, but all human beings are under the power of sin and death. Under the power of sin and death we were perishing like the slaves. But while we were still sinners, Christ died for us (Ro 5:8). He set us free from the power of sin and death. This is God's grace to us.

God's grace was not only to deliver the people of Israel from bondage in Egypt. God's grace was also to raise them up to be his servants. Exodus 19:4-6a explains this well. It says, "You yourselves have seen what I did to Egypt, and how I carried you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself. Now if you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then out of all nations you will be my treasured possession.

Although the whole earth is mine, you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation." God saved them from slavery. Now he wants to train them and establish them as a kingdom of priests and a holy nation so that through them the whole world would come to know God and his grace. For this purpose, he gave them the Ten Commandments.

The first commandment: You shall have no other gods before me (3). Read verse 3. "You shall have no other gods before me." When we study Genesis, we see that God created man and the world. God created the world for God's own glory and for the happiness of mankind. Therefore, "You shall have no other gods before me," means we must recognize our God as the unique Creator God. We must recognize our God as the Maker of each individual person. "You shall have no other gods before me," means that we must love God first in our hearts. Deuteronomy 6:5 explains this well. It says, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength." God does not say, "You can love me with half of your heart and something else with the other half of your heart. Fallen man cannot give his heart to two masters. Jesus said in Matthew 6:24: "No one can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Money."

"You shall have no other gods before me," means that we must worship God alone. What does the word "worship" mean? Worship means intense love and admiration. Why do we have to love God intensely? It sounds too radical. But Matthew 6:33 says, "But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well." The secret of man's happiness is to love God and his Son Jesus Christ. God abundantly blesses those who love him first: God makes them happy and protects them from the invasion of the devil. When one does not love God, there is a great danger to him, whoever he may be. The devil snatches those who don't love God one by one, missing no one, and makes them prisoners in his dungeon. He makes them godless. He poisons them with doubt and bitterness and makes them endlessly unhappy. Therefore, we must love God with all our hearts. The Bible says, You shall have no other gods before me.

The second commandment: You shall not make for yourself an idol (4-6). Look at verses 4-6. "You shall not make for yourself an idol in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me, but showing love to a thousand generations of those who love me and keep my commandments." "You shall not make for yourself an idol" sounds similar to, "You shall have no other gods before me. But it has a different meaning. God made man in the image of God. In other words, God made man with the spirit of God. So man has the desire to worship

God. Man's desire to worship something is incredibly great. Many people even worship sick basketball players or rock musicians. In the ancient times, Greek people denied God and started their thinking from man's existence. Then a very strange thing happened. As we know well, the people of Greece produced innumerable stories of idols in the name of myths. When Paul went to Athens, there were so many idols that they could not name them all. So there was even an idol to an unknown god. It is a surprising contradiction that those Greeks who denied spiritual reality made so many idols, which were associated with spiritual realities. God created man to worship God and God alone. This is the reason God commanded, You shall not make for yourself an idol....

At this moment, we must examine ourselves: Do I worship God only? Or, do I have idols in my heart?" There was a very pretty young woman who lived in the region of Samaria. She began to like a young man. She began to idolize him. But soon she found that he was selfish. He didn't really love her, he loved himself. She was disillusioned. So she broke up with him and looked for another. In one way or another she had married five times and now was living with a boyfriend. No one understood her. No one could help her. But one day, she met Jesus at the well of Jacob. Jesus humbly asked her for a favor, saying, Will you give me a drink? (Jn 4:7) She was moved by his humbleness and opened her heart to him. He wanted to help solve her problem from the root. He knew that her problem was a worship problem. When she lived according to her sinful nature she worshiped men, who were flesh, in the place of God. In other words, she was an idol worshiper. Jesus told her, God is Spirit and his worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth (Jn 4:24). She repented her idol worship and began to worship God who is Spirit. Then she was changed from a sinful, destructive woman into a godly woman of good influence who became a source of blessing to all Samaria. Like her, we must repent of idol worship. We must worship God and God alone.

The third commandment: You shall not misuse the name of the Lord your God (7). Look at verse 7. You shall not misuse the name of the Lord your God, for the Lord will not hold anyone guiltless who misuses his name." Jesus taught us to pray, "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name" (Mt 6:9). The psalmist writes, I will praise your name for your love and your faithfulness, for you have exalted above all things your name and your word" (Ps 138:2). God's name represents God's character, his holiness and love, his faithfulness and truth. We must tell of his love and grace and proclaim his wonderful works to the ends of the earth. To call oneself a Christian but act like a godless person is to misuse God's name. To speak God's name in a thoughtless, irreverent manner depersonalizes God, for we are acting as if he were not present and didn't know what was going on. To live an unholy life while professing to be a Christian is misusing God's name. God says that he will judge those who misuse his name. Our deep love of God and

our reverent fear of him must keep us respectful toward God's name and aware of his personal presence with us everywhere, all the time.

The fourth commandment: Keep the Sabbath holy (8-11). Look at verses 8-11. "Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your manservant or maidservant, nor your animals, nor the alien within your gates. For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but he rested on the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy." God made man to work hard for six days, not five days or four days, but six days. St. Paul said, If a man will not work, he shall not eat (2Thes 3:10b).

God also set apart the seventh day as a Sabbath day. We must keep the Sabbath day holy. There was a young man named Eric Little. He was a runner. He said, God made me fast. He won a place on his national Olympic team for the 1924 Games. Many expected him to win a gold medal in the 100 meter race. But when he arrived at the Games, he learned that the trials for his event were scheduled on Sunday, the Sabbath day. He knew that God wanted him to keep the Sabbath day holy. So instead of running, he went to church and shared a message from Isaiah. He said, All men are like grass and all their glory is like the flowers of the field; the grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of the Lord stands forever. He set a good example in keeping the Sabbath day holy. He also won a gold medal in another event, the 400 meters. God honors those who honor him. God wants us to worship God on the seventh day. So coming to Sunday worship service must be our first priority.

What happens when we keep the Sabbath holy? When we keep the Sabbath holy, the reward is great. God gives us true rest. God gives us the peace of God. God gives us new strength to work hard. God gives meaning in our lives. Read verse 8. Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy.

II. Love your neighbor as yourself (12-17)

This part is about the last six commandments which concern our relationships with people. Jesus summarized: "Love your neighbor as yourself."

The fifth commandment: Honor your parents (12). Look at verse 12. "Honor your father and your mother, so that you may live long in the land the Lord your God is giving you." These days, there are many people who take their parents to nursing homes instead of caring for them. They do not remember their parents' grace or how they labored in

love for them. They treat their parents in such a poor way because they are godless and heartless. Those who know God must honor their parents. Honoring parents is the exact representation of honoring God. The Bible says, Honor your father and your mother....

The sixth commandment: Do not murder (13). Look at verse 13. "You shall not murder." God is the author of life. Only God can give life to man; only God has the right to take his life away. Murder is a violation of God's sovereignty. Murder includes suicide, abortion and euthanasia. According to the New Testament, murder includes hatred and rage. The Bible says, You shall not murder.

The seventh commandment: Do not commit adultery (14). Look at verse 14. "You shall not commit adultery." Basically, adultery is being unfaithful to marriage vows. Faithfulness to one's marriage vows and respecting the marriage vows of others are closely related to faithfulness to God. This commandment shows God's concern for the family. The family is the cornerstone of society. God created it before man s fall. Human effort cannot preserve the family. Every family needs God's help. When we obey God's commands, God will help us. Through this command God also forbids sex outside of marriage. The New Testament says that those who are sexually immoral cannot enter the kingdom of God (Heb 13:4; Gal 5:19-21). Jesus said about the seventh commandment: "You have heard that it was said, Do not commit adultery. But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart" (Mt 5:27,28). We need to come to God with humble hearts, repent before his word and receive his cleansing.

The eighth commandment: Do not steal (15). Look at verse 15. "You shall not steal." To some people, stealing may seem to be a light matter. But verse 15 says, "You shall not steal." God knows fallen man so well. In committing sin, most men start by stealing. Many people who start stealing could not stop. One young woman who pretends to be a Christian has a habit of shoplifting. One day she got caught. This is one example, but virtually everyone has the habit of stealing something intentionally or unintentionally. We must stop stealing by obeying God's command, "Do not steal."

The ninth commandment: Do not give false testimony against your neighbor (16). Look at verse 16. "You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor." We are living in a pragmatic society. We are also living in a democratic society. In a democratic society the opinion of the majority rules. Frequently, in order to get a majority vote, people tell lies to defame the character of their political opponents. Not only in the political world, but in many realms of society, people give false testimony to get some advantage over others. But the Bible says, "You shall not give false testimony

against you neighbor. We should not be professional false testimony makers even though we live in this crooked world.

The tenth commandment: Do not envy others (17). Look at verse 17. "You shall not covet your neighbor's house. You shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or his manservant or maidservant, his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor." We have a sinful nature that envies others' fame, wealth and popularity. Envy urges us to undermine great men and women to make them nobody. We even envy others' cars and computers. But the Bible says, You shall not covet.

Praise God who brought us out of slavery to sin. May God bless us with his command in our hearts: "You shall have no other gods before me." And may God bless us to keep the Sabbath day holy. May God restore his law in the hearts of our people so that we may grow as a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.