

THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

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."

The Ten Commandments can be divided into two parts: The first part, verses 3-11, contains the first four commandments. These commandments concern our relationship with God. Jesus summed up these teachings in Matthew 22:37: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind." The second part, verses 12-17, contains the last six commandments. These concern our relationships with people. Most of these commandments are stated as negatives. "You shall not..." Jesus summed up these commandments positively: "Love your neighbor as yourself" (Mt 22:39). Until now the Israelites had lived lawlessly because they were in bondage as slaves in Egypt. But now God gives them the Ten Commandments so that they may be God's people with God's law. According to scholars in law, these Ten Commandments are the foundation of all the laws of all nations.

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? He 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 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. Those who are under the power of sin and death are perishing like the slaves because of their hard labor and whippings.

God's grace was not only to deliver them from their bondage; God's grace was also to uphold them 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 wanted 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. So he gave them the Ten Commandments. Let's think about the first four commandments, which teach us how to love God.

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," explains 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 first and love other things too." Fallen man has no ability to love both. Jesus says 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. God abundantly blesses those who love him. God blesses those who love him first and 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, no matter who 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. The devil poisons them with doubt and bitterness and makes them endlessly unhappy. Therefore, we must love God with all our hearts.

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. 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 his people not to make any idols.

At this moment, we must examine ourselves: Do I worship God only? Or, do I have idols in my heart?" Some women have more than 20 idols in their small hearts. Some men do too. But when one young man accepted Jesus Christ through one-to-one Bible study, he broke a huge number of rock albums and threw them away. Likewise, each of us in the name of Jesus Christ, must break all the idols in our hearts and throw them away.

The third commandment: You shall not misuse the name of the Lord your God (7). Read 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 and 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 pretending 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). Read 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 six days and set apart the seventh day

as a Sabbath day. Sunday is our Sabbath day in which we worship God and serve needy brothers and sisters. How do we worship God? We must study the Bible and pray and repent of the sins which bother our consciences. We worship God by coming to church and listening to the word of God. But listening to the word of God is not enough in worshiping. After hearing the word of God, we must practice it right away. So we say: "Sunday Worship Service." Our forefathers came to church very early and studied the Bible and had a regular worship service. Then they ate lunch together and in the afternoon they visited the sick and helped the needy, going all over the town or community. This is worship service.

In order to keep the Sabbath holy, we must work six days very diligently. Those who do not work six days very diligently have no basic qualification to worship God because they have violated the basic truth that men are supposed to work diligently during six days. So, Saint Paul, who was the commander-in-chief of the early world mission headquarters, said, "If a man will not work, he shall not eat" (2Thes 3:10b). These days, there are many young men who don't want to work hard for six days. They only think about enjoying fun on the weekend. They begin on Friday afternoon and play through Sunday night. They are regarded as very normal people. But in the sight of God, they are violators of the Sabbath.

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 us a basic knowledge that we are doing something meaningful.

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 sixth commandment: Do not murder (13). Look at verse 13. "You shall not murder." Here verse 13 says, "You shall not murder." It does not say, "You will not murder." "Shall not" is different from "will not." "Shall not" means that a man has no right to murder. God is the

author of life. Only God has the right to give life to man and to take his life away. Murder is a violation of God's sovereign rule. In light of this command, we must pray that murder stories may not be seen on the screens of TVs. And we must pray especially for children not to watch movies about murder too much.

The seventh commandment: Do not commit adultery (14). Read 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 himself 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). Who among us is innocent by Jesus' standard? We need to come to him with humble hearts and repent before his word and receive his cleansing.

The eighth commandment: Do not steal (15). Read 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 99.9% of people have 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). Read 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). Read 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 and wealth and popularity. We have a sinful nature that urges us to undermine great men and women to make them nobody out of our envy. We even envy others' cars and computers. This is the reason this command is given.

May God bless you with his command in your hearts. Verses 2-3 say, "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." And may God bless you to keep the Sabbath holy.