

Exodus 20

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[0 : 0 0] Well this morning we're in our 12th sermon on the book of Exodus 5 of I think 16 and we are in the chapter that was read to us chapter 20 of Exodus.

! It's on page 61 if you've got a black church Bible. So we're at Mount Sinai and we're listening to the Ten Commandments. And I don't know what your reaction is when you hear the phrase Ten Commandments.

What is it that comes into your mind when you hear the phrase the Ten Commandments? Do you think of them as being good news? Or do you think of them as being depressing? Do you think of them as being relevant as ancient history?

Do you think of them as a good blueprint for a government? Are the Ten Commandments for the world? Or are they just for the religious?

Are they commands? Or are they still good principles that we kind of have to work out ourselves? Are they pretty optional now that Jesus has come?

[1 : 1 1] Well let me tell you there is a yes virtually to every single one of those questions across the world. And very sadly across the church today.

There's a whole spectrum of what people believe about the Ten Commandments. And I want to try and say a few words this morning that will help us to see them as we are meant to see them. Three questions this morning that I'm going to ask.

And the three questions are these. Number one, who are they for? Number two, what do they mean? And number three, where do they lead?

Who are they for? What do they mean? And where do they lead? And under each of those questions I've got two answers. So number one, who are they for? Who are the Ten Commandments for?

Well I hope you know that. I hope that you're here each Sunday. We read the Ten Commandments most Sundays. And if you know this chapter at all, you will know that they are for God's people.

[2 : 1 0] So listen to the verse three verses of Exodus 20. God spoke all these words saying, I am the Lord your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt.

Out of the house of slavery. I've already brought you out of Egypt. Out of the land of slavery. And then verse three, you shall have no other gods before me.

Now it is impossible for me to overstate this morning the very profound truth. That verse two comes before verse three. Alright? Okay, let me put that another way.

Verse three comes after verse two. God says, I have rescued you. Now this is how I want you to live. He redeems his people.

He saves his people. And then he instructs his people. To make it very simple, he delivers. And then he directs. He gives liberty.

[3 : 0 9] And then he gives his law. He makes the relationship. And then the rules. Or as one commentator says, Look at what he does.

Before you see what he demands. And if you think that's just a small issue. It's a really obvious point. It's not a big deal. I challenge you to talk to the famous man in the street.

And you will discover that the famous man in the street. The average Joe gets this totally wrong. Doesn't he? Or she? The famous man in the street thinks if you keep the rules. You may one day after death.

Get the relationship. If you live well. You will get life eternal. The Bible says the exact opposite. The other religions of the world get this completely wrong.

The religions of the world essentially teach. If you are religious. In the directives in which they give you. In the end you will get the reward. If you are good.

[4 : 08] You may get God. But that is exactly the opposite of what the Bible teaches. So when Jesus sat by a well with a woman. Who was sad and sinful.

You remember John chapter 4. He began pretty well by saying to her. I give you living water. I will give you a brand new life.

Then of course she started making excuses. And he began to talk to her about God's standards. So that she would see her need for new life. But notice the secret. He begins with grace first.

And exodus begins with grace. God's undeserved kindness first. In all the Bible. God offers relationship freely. And then he provides instructions.

When you've responded. Some of you who've kind of grown up. Maybe in religious homes. Or got a religious background. You may be familiar with something called dispensationalism.

Dispensationalism.

[5 : 07] It's a movement that began in America in the mid-19th century. And it divided the Bible into different phases. Or dispensations. And three for the Abraham phase.

And the Moses phase. And at its worst. It argued for different methods of salvation. So for Abraham. Salvation was by promise.

That God had promised. But for Moses. His phase. Was salvation by works. And that of course produces dreadful. Awful confusion. Because in the end.

The Bible is always taught. Salvation by grace. There are not two gospels. In the Bible. You don't have an Old Testament gospel.

That is by works. And a New Testament gospel. That is by grace. And so how did people. Become believers. In the Old Testament. They became believers in the Old Testament.

[6 : 08] In exactly the same way you do. They looked forward to Christ. We looked back. You don't have an Old Testament gospel. By works. And a New by grace. The Old is by grace.

And the New is by grace. All scripture. Teaches grace. So why are the Ten Commandments mostly negative? Have you ever thought that?

People dislike being restricted. Don't they? People think a religion that is. Thou shalt not. And thou shalt not. And thou shalt not. It's an awful thing. And the Ten Commandments look very restrictive. Don't they? The answer is this. That the negative. Is actually more liberating. If you are told positively.

You must do. Then it's actually much more restrictive. One commentator puts it like this. A positive command telling you.

[7 : 08] Do this. Restricts life. To that one course of action. Whereas a negative command. Leaves life open. To every course of action.

Except one. So if you go to a park. Or a library. Or a museum. Or a swimming pool. You will often see.

You will need a list of what not to do. It's very unlikely. If you go to the park this afternoon. Or the swimming pool. That you'll see a list of what to do. We don't do that. Do we? Because there are huge freedoms.

In the park. Or the library. Or the museum. Or the swimming pool. There's just a few things. That you must not do. It's wonderfully liberating. That the commandments.

Each of them. Are thou must not. Why are the commandments. Traditionally on two tablets. Tablets of stone. If you watch that Greek film. The Ten Commandments. Isn't it? Charles of Heston.

[8 : 06] Comes down with his two stone tablets. With one to five. Written on one side. And then. Six to ten. Written on the other. As if God couldn't put them. On both sides of the tablet.

I think the answer is not. That. The first table of the law. Was written on one. And the second table of the law. Was on the other. And because of treaty. A covenant. In the ancient. In the ancient Near East.

You each got a copy. Both parties. Of the covenant. Got a copy. And because God's copy. If I might put it reverently.

Didn't need to go back with him to heaven. So he could remember it. But it went into the temple. And the Israelites copy. Well went with the Israelites.

Didn't it? And it went into the temple. Both copies. Went into the temple. Now that was the first answer. To the first question. Who are the commandments for? They are for the rescued people of God.

[9 : 05] There is however. A second answer to that question. Who are they for? And that is that the commandments. They are meant to be reflected. To the world. The ten commandments are meant. To show the standard of God. For his people. So in a sense. In the garden of Eden. God instructed Adam and Eve. In a lot of areas. Didn't he? Like serve me.

Relate to me. In my world. Be in relationship. With me. You are made. In my image. You are the image of God. God. I've got work for you to do.

This is what family is all about. They were the commands. And the garden of Eden. And there is a very real sense. In what is happening in Exodus chapter 20. Is Genesis being restated.

So that the world. Will know. The sort of world. That God expects. And that God seeks. And the world will know. What God is working towards.

[10 : 07] Jesus. So does this mean. That you and I. Should use the Ten Commandments. In our evangelism. In telling other people. About the gospel. Is it a good idea.

To take people. To the Ten Commandments. And show them. That they've broken them. And then show them. That Jesus will forgive them. And Jesus will save them. The answer to that.

I think. Is sometimes. That is helpful. So Christians. In former times. If you read a lot. Of the Puritans. They would have talked. About the commandments. Being the needle. That pulls.

The scarlet thread. Of the gospel. But I think. It's right to say. That actually. We live. Don't we. In an unchurched. Culture. And our culture today.

The people that you work with. The people that. Live on my street. Is a very. Unchurched. Culture. And I think. Probably. There is too much. Preamble. That is needed.

[11 : 02] To explain the commandments. And what they are for. And what they say. And who it is. Behind them. I think. It is much better. To bring people. As quickly. As possible.

Face to face. With Jesus Christ. To expose them. To Jesus. It was his own challenge. Of kingship. And rescue. For people. People. My new year's resolution. Is.

I'm getting weary. Of telling people. That I work as a minister. I'm feeling. Of telling people. That I am paid. To help people. Take Jesus seriously. That is my job. That's my new plan.

For the new year. And I think. That is what the focus. Should be. Of our witness. That you are not paid. To do it. But I am. That we should take. We would tell. People. Should tell people.

To take. Jesus. Seriously. The first question. Who are they for? They are for the people of God. And they are to be radiated. To the world. The world of God.

[11 : 56] Secondly. What do the Ten Commandments mean? What are they actually saying? Now you could have five. Or ten. Or twenty. Say ones on each of them. We could go for two years.

Preaching through each of the Ten Commandments. We could probably go for ten years on them. I'm going to come back to them. Probably later this year. Or the early part of next year. And preach on each commandment individually.

But I didn't want to do that in this series. There is an awful lot you can say about each commandment. So let's just take number eight. Let's take the commandment about stealing. You shall not steal.

Let's think about it. What can we talk about? You can talk about shoplifting. You can talk about extortion. Embezzlement. You can talk about underpaying your taxes.

You can talk about making false claims. You can talk about speaking ill of someone. Ruining a reputation. You can talk about people at work who waste money.

[12 : 56] You can talk about people who are lazy. You can talk about people who take unwarranted sick days. You can talk about making illegitimate phone calls. And surfing the net during work time.

You can talk about playing computer games on work time. You can talk about things like corporate fraud. Offshore accounts. False advertising. Price gouging. Deceptive packaging.

High interest. Fiscal bondage. Abusive copyright. Plagiarism. Identity theft. Gambling. On and on and on. It's a huge subject isn't it?

So here's. Let me give you a very quick skim of the ten commandments. Here's what they say. Have no other gods number one. Love and trust the God of the Bible.

Your one heart. Is meant to be given. To the one God. Number two. Make no idols. How long we can spend on this. How possible. It is to be here this morning.

[13 : 57] But to be way away from God. Because there is another God in your life. Another priority. Another passion. Another person.

Who absolutely dominates your heart. And life. But the Bible says. Make no idols. Don't invent one. Don't do it mentally.

Don't do it mentally. Use the word of God. To understand God. Don't make inventions. Number three.

Don't misuse his name. Don't take his name. Don't take his character. Don't take the relationship with God lightly. Don't try and distort him.

Don't try and reshape him. Your devotion to him. Should be glorifying to him. And your speech about him. Should be glorifying to him.

[14 : 53] Number four. Keep the Sabbath. It's a reminder that the world. Is not our goal. But the kingdom of God. Is our goal. And more important than the world.

Is the kingdom. And that is where you and I must show. That we are kingdom people. In the world. So you may remember of course. That the Israelites in Egypt.

They would have not had a Sabbath. They would have had no Sabbath. It is a privilege to have Sabbath. To have a day that is given to us. By God.

For God. That shows us what God has done. And what God will do. A day that belongs to him. Where you don't have to work.

It's a phenomenal privilege. It is a great privilege. Number five. Honor your parents. Take seriously your elders. It is quite possible.

[15 : 50] That your parents. Will provide the stability. For a sensible life. And hopefully. They will provide you. With the gospel of eternal life. For you. So listen carefully to them.

Number six. Do not kill. You are a private individual. You are to seek the security. And the welfare. Of every person. From their conception.

To their death. Number seven. Do not commit adultery. Sex is good. And great. And safe. And right. In the context.

Of a heterosexual marriage. Between a husband and a wife. Aim to be as pure as you can be.

Number eight. Do not steal. Keep the boundaries of property.

Live honestly. Live fittingly. I was reading that one hotel. In central London. In 2013. In its first year of business. Lost 18,000 tiles.

[16 : 48] Bibles from the bathroom. 355 coffee pots. From the restaurant. 38,000 spoons. From the rooms. And 100 Bibles.

From the cupboards. In one year. Number nine. Do not lie. Your word should represent the truth. Do not speak that another person is damaged.

Number ten. Do not covet. Your heart should be content. And to what more is greed. Which brings us back to idolatry. And godlessness.

Now that is a really really quick skim. Of what the ten commandments are saying. And the question we need to ask. Is what do they do? What do they do?

And the answer of course. Is what they do. Is they show us. Something of the greatness of God. They show us what life should be like. I don't need to tell you.

[17 : 47] That if we had the ability. As a nation. To keep these commandments. We would be a sensational nation. But a huge amount of our sadness.

And our destructiveness. And our divisiveness. And our damage. Comes. Because we just don't have the ability. To keep these commandments. They do in some sense.

Restrain society. They do that. But they don't have power. So they are not that good. At restraining society. They don't convert.

The ten commandments. They just convict us. They don't save us. The ten commandments. Make an absolutely hopeless ladder. For climbing up to God.

If it's ever occurred to you. That you might climb a ladder up to God. Across the ten commandments. That will never happen. And so God gave the ten commandments.

[18 : 42] To Israel. So that they should live by them. But of course. As they sought to live by the ten commandments. They realised they couldn't do it. Like you can't do it.

And so God. So clearly. Most clearly. Saw them. Taught them. Their need. Of a saviour. Well I've tried to rush over.

What the ten commandments are. For God's people. That they are. In a sense. For God's people. And then to reflect. To the world. And we've also tried to skim across. The meaning of them. And see what they do.

The last question. I want to ask. Is this. Where does the law lead? Where does the law lead? The new testament tells us. That the law of God.

Leads to Christ. The law of God. Is not an enemy of Christ. The law is a friend of Christ. The law leads to Christ.

[19 : 42] Romans 3. We read. We read the law. And we become conscious of sin. So look at commandment number 1. Verse 3.

Have you kept it? No. Number 2. Verse 4. I've not kept that either. Number 3. Number 4. No. Right down to number 10.

We've not kept it. We become conscious of sin. But Galatians chapter 3 says. The law. Makes us conscious of sin. But it leads us to Christ.

And it points us to a saviour. As I want to say. The law. And the gospel. They are not enemies. They are not on different missions. In a sense.

The law is doing the x-ray. And showing the need. And the gospel is doing the surgery. And bringing the healing. So like the x-ray.

[20 : 39] And the surgeon. In a hospital. They are working together. They are God's provision. So that we will know both the problem. And the solution. And when we follow the law to Christ.

And I don't know if you've ever thought about that. There are many reasons to go to Christ. Are there? Law may be one. His love may be another. His hope may be another.

His truth may be another. His fellowship and friendship may be another. There are many reasons to go to Christ. But if you do follow the path of the law to Christ.

He discovers some remarkable things. He discovers that Christ embodied the law. That when you go to Jesus. It's like seeing the ten commandments in flesh.

Lived out. Let me show you that. Commandment number one. Jesus shows us the true God. Commandment number two.

[21 : 42] Jesus is the true image of God. Number three. Jesus name is the name above every name. Number four. Jesus gives the rest of a Sabbath.

Number five. Jesus brings us into the family of God. Number six. Jesus gives us life. Saving us from death. Number seven. Jesus is the bridegroom.

Saving us from lostness. Number eight. Jesus is the treasure. And the inheritance. Number nine. Jesus is the way. The truth.

And not the lie. Number ten. Jesus is the sufficient seed. In whom we must be satisfied and at rest. And so Jesus embodies.

Jesus personifies the law. And the other thing about Jesus is he keeps the law. Unbelievably. He keeps the law in thought and word and deed.

[22 : 45] He loves the Lord his God with all his soul and mind and strength. At the deepest level of all the commandments Jesus kept the law. And even more wonderfully.

Jesus saves law breakers. He knows what we are like. He is the one person who kept the law and can save the law breaker.

And so when we turn to him. And when we ask for mercy from him. And when we put our trust in him. He gathers us up.

And he places us in his own victory. So that we are in Christ Jesus. And we are in his own performance. And we are in his own faithfulness.

And we then discover that we are secure. Not because we are trying to imitate him. Yet that would be impossible. But because we are caught up in his success.

[23 : 42] We are united to Christ. And he puts us in the very centre of his faithfulness. And we are saved because of him and his performance. And then he begins to produce in us by his spirit.

A new faithfulness. But slowly and steadily. We start to do his will. And to walk in his way. It's not a perfection is it?

But Jesus Christ gives us by his spirit a new willingness. So we are no longer frightened. We are no longer under the law. Thinking how can I be saved?

We know that he has paid the penalty for a broken law. For that standard. But we are now under the law. With direction. With his spirit's direction.

And so we take. The tablet of the ten commandments. From the hands of Jesus. And we seek to live a new life. That he has given us.

[24 : 49] And that is why of course the law leads to godliness. We find ourselves in our best moments. With a question that goes like this.

In our best moments. We ask. How godly can we be? Today I want to be as godly as possible. And we are no longer asking the question.

What can I get away with? We don't find ourselves asking. How much vengeance can I do? We don't find ourselves asking. How reconciling can I be?

We don't find ourselves saying. How much of the Lord's day do I need to give for him? We don't find ourselves saying. How much thanks can I get away with? No.

We find ourselves asking in our best moments. How pure can I be? It's not how much can I steal? Or how little can I do? It's how honest and how faithful can I be?

[25 : 49] It's a brand new question. And so the law becomes attractive to Christians. And we read the Psalms. And we see David who says. Oh how I love your law.

How I delight in your commandments. It's as if we look at the Ten Commandments. And we say this is constructive. This is like the directions on a medicine bottle.

This is helpful. This will do me good. This is like the recipe instructions in a cookbook. That if I follow these instructions. I will feast well. It's like the instructions being given to you.

To somebody's glorious holiday house. That you know that if you follow them. There will be great benefit. There is blessing. And so suddenly we begin to see the commandments of God as good.

And God has put his law on our hearts. So it's not just there on a stone tablet. God by giving us new life. Has taken away our heart of stone.

[26 : 49] And given us a heart of flesh. And put out his law on our hearts. So our whole life is affected. And we find ourselves as the people of God.

With a new devotion to God. And a new work ethic. And a new rest ethic. And new relationships. And new property ideas.

And new speech. And our deepest desires are being ministered to. By God's good word. Now it's possible that you are thinking about Christianity.

Here this morning. We're really, really pleased if you are here. And you are thinking to yourself.

Christianity has got some attractive things about it. I like these people. I like the people around me.

That's why I'm here. And I'm just trying to weigh up. Should I actually carve off 10 to 11. Or half 10 to half 11. Or half 10 to about quarter to 12.

[27 : 46] Alright. On a Sunday morning as my Christianity. Should I do that? Let me tell you this. God wants from 10.30 on Sunday morning.

Till the following Sunday. 10.30 in the morning. And God wants the 24 hours. Of your every day. And God wants 7 days of every week.

And God wants from you every week. Of this year. And God wants every year of your life. And you do not give to him a hand.

Or a year. Or a foot. But the Bible says. Because of his great bodies. You give your body to him.

God wants you. And God wants to bless you.

And God wants to own you. You are not your own. And God wants to use you. And therefore we do not find freedom.

[28 : 42] By keeping the bulk back. And giving a little bit to him. It is when we give ourselves to him completely. That we find our freedom.

And that is when he begins to bless. Every single part of our lives. Now of course most people here are believers. And you understand a little bit about freedom. And you wish maybe that you were a little bit freer.

And of course we are always tempted to think aren't we. We would be a little bit freer. If we give maybe a 50-50 with God. Or maybe on a good day a 90-10.

But actual freedom comes. When having put our trust in Jesus Christ. And being free from the penalty of sin. And having a brand new life.

In our heart we say to him. I want to walk with you in the fullness of your word. And so teenagers. Listen to me for a moment. You will be told the lie.

[29 : 45] That freedom is found in doing what you want. And you will be told that freedom lies. In doing what everybody else wants. And I want to say to you that is a lie.

That is the way to slavery. That is the way to hell. Freedom is found. In giving yourself wholeheartedly. And 100% to the Lord Jesus.

But after you give yourself to him. Soul, mind and strength. He gives us the willingness to walk in his ways. And in his words. And as we follow his law. We find tremendous freedom. The devil tells you. He whispers in your ear. That the kind of freedom that God offers. Actually you are better off losing your freedom. But that kind of freedom. To follow God's law. Is actually to find it. Because it is in his service. That we find perfect freedom. So there is salvation.

[30 : 44] First. And service second. The salvation frees us. From every danger. And the service frees us.

From many secondary dangers as well. And so I want to urge you. To all who believe. Myself as well. That as we move on from this service this morning.

As we sing the final hymn. As we talk together. That in our minds and our hearts. We say you have rescued me. Lord. You have brought me up out of Egypt.

You have redeemed me. You have saved me. And you have given me clear instructions. In which I must live. And how I must walk.

And I am praying now Lord. Please give me the willingness. Please give me a deep. Deep willingness. To do your will.

[31 : 44] And keep your word. And it is there. That you will find. Great peace. And great joy.

Let's bow our heads and pray. Let's bow our heads.