

# Zoom Bible Study

led by Mary Lowman

## Growing Closer to God

The life of Moses

April 2, 2024

Exodus 19 – 20 - Moses and the Ten Commandments

### Exodus 19:1 – 8

On the first day of the third month after the Israelites left Egypt—on that very day—they came to the Desert of Sinai. <sup>2</sup>After they set out from Rephidim, they entered the Desert of Sinai, and Israel camped there in the desert in front of the mountain.

<sup>3</sup>Then Moses went up to God, and the Lord called to him from the mountain and said, “This is what you are to say to the descendants of Jacob and what you are to tell the people of Israel: <sup>4</sup>‘You yourselves have seen what I did to Egypt, and how I carried you on eagles’ wings and brought you to myself. <sup>5</sup>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, <sup>6</sup>you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.’ These are the words you are to speak to the Israelites.”

<sup>7</sup>So Moses went back and summoned the elders of the people and set before them all the words the Lord had commanded him to speak. <sup>8</sup>The people all responded together, “We will do everything the Lord has said.” So Moses brought their answer back to the Lord.

Would Israel’s life, their history be better or worse if they had kept their promise to do everything God said?

We have been chosen by God.

#### John 1:11 – 13:

*He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. <sup>12</sup>Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God— <sup>13</sup>children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband’s will, but born of God.*

#### John 15:16:

*You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit—fruit that will last—and so that whatever you ask in my name the Father will give you.*

#### Ephesians 1:11

*In him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will.*

How do you know if you are chosen?

- Have you moved from darkness into his light?

#### 1 Peter 2:9:

*But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.*

- Are you led by the Spirit of God? Does your spirit commune with God's Spirit?

**Romans 8:14, 16:**

*For those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God. The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children.*

**Colossians 3:12 - 17**

Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. <sup>13</sup> Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. <sup>14</sup> And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity. <sup>15</sup> Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful. <sup>16</sup> Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts. <sup>17</sup> And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

Here are ten "new commandments" for us today:

- |                                    |                                                |
|------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------|
| 1. Clothe yourself with compassion | 6. Bear with each other                        |
| 2. Clothe yourself with kindness   | 7. Forgive each other                          |
| 3. Clothe yourself with humility   | 8. Put on love                                 |
| 4. Clothe yourself with gentleness | 9. Let the peace of Christ rule in your heart. |
| 5. Clothe yourself with patience   | 10. Be thankful                                |

Can you think of some harm you have suffered, some consequences you may still be living with because you weren't willing at some point to let God control your thoughts and actions?

**Exodus 20:1 - 21**

And God spoke all these words:

<sup>2</sup> "I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery.

<sup>3</sup> "You shall have no other gods before me.

<sup>4</sup> "You shall not make for yourself an image in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. <sup>5</sup> 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 parents to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me, <sup>6</sup> but showing love to a thousand generations of those who love me and keep my commandments.

<sup>7</sup> "You shall not misuse the name of the Lord your God, for the Lord will not hold anyone guiltless who misuses his name.

<sup>8</sup> "Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. <sup>9</sup> Six days you shall labor and do all your work, <sup>10</sup> 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 male or female servant, nor your animals, nor any foreigner residing in your towns. <sup>11</sup> 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.

<sup>12</sup> "Honor your father and your mother, so that you may live long in the land the Lord your God is giving you.

<sup>13</sup> "You shall not murder.

<sup>14</sup> "You shall not commit adultery.

<sup>15</sup> "You shall not steal.

<sup>16</sup> "You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor.

<sup>17</sup> “You shall not covet your neighbor’s house. You shall not covet your neighbor’s wife, or his male or female servant, his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor.”

<sup>18</sup> When the people saw the thunder and lightning and heard the trumpet and saw the mountain in smoke, they trembled with fear. They stayed at a distance <sup>19</sup> and said to Moses, “Speak to us yourself and we will listen. But do not have God speak to us or we will die.”

<sup>20</sup> Moses said to the people, “Do not be afraid. God has come to test you, so that the fear of God will be with you to keep you from sinning.”

<sup>21</sup> The people remained at a distance, while Moses approached the thick darkness where God was.

Do the Ten Commandments have meaning for us today?

This *God-based moral code* set the God of Israel – the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob – apart from the commonly worshipped gods of the pagan world at that time.

What is it about our human heart that makes us naturally refuse to obey?

The idea of a God-based moral code has become less and less popular.

**Isaiah 5:20:**

*Woe to those who call evil good and good evil, who put darkness for light and light for darkness, who put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter.*

This is a pretty accurate description of our culture today. Is it working?

The Bible tells us that the law is good:

**Romans 7:12:**

*So then, the law is holy, and the commandment is holy, righteous and good.*

Therefore, these commandments are good for us. Name some of the ways they are good for us and for all people.

Another aspect of the covenant was *sacrifice*, which was given because both God and Israel knew that it was impossible for them to keep this law perfectly, and they must depend on the sacrifice of an innocent victim as a substitute for the guilty law-breaker.

Jesus summarized the Ten Commandments in **Matthew 22:35 – 40:**

One of them, an expert in the law, tested him with this question: <sup>36</sup> “Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?”

<sup>37</sup> Jesus replied: “‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ <sup>38</sup> This is the first and greatest commandment. <sup>39</sup> And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ <sup>40</sup> All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.”

Jesus himself was the only one to ever keep the law perfectly. Thankfully, *Jesus’ obedience is credited to those who put their love and trust in him.*

**Romans 8:2-3:**

Because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit who gives life has set you free from the law of sin and death. <sup>3</sup> For what the law was powerless to do because it was weakened by the flesh, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh to be a sin offering. And so he condemned sin in the flesh.

**Galatians 2:21:**

*I do not set aside the grace of God, for if righteousness could be gained through the law, Christ died for nothing!*

The law was and is a schoolmaster—a guardian—to us:

**Galatians 3:23 – 25:**

Before the coming of this faith, we were held in custody under the law, locked up until the faith that was to come would be revealed. <sup>24</sup> So the law was our guardian until Christ came that we might be justified by faith. <sup>25</sup> Now that this faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian.

As born-again believers in Jesus Christ, we are free from the law's condemnation. But we are not free to disobey those laws.

"Does New Testament grace allow a lower standard than Old Testament law? The standard under grace is higher." (Redpath)

The first four commandments focus on our conduct toward God.

**Commandment 1:** *"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."* (Exodus 20:2-3)

Note that God gave them this code of laws *after* he delivered them from Egypt. In the same way, he delivered you from the condemnation that sin demands. You were saved by grace alone. But once you came into the family of God, he reveals to you the "house rules," as it were. The big difference is that he gives you the power to do what he asks you to do.

**2 Corinthians 5:17:**

*Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!*

Your standing before God is now clear: God sees you "in Christ," and your sins can no longer condemn you. But the "old you" still hangs around.

**Romans 7:21 – 25:**

So I find this law at work: Although I want to do good, evil is right there with me. <sup>22</sup> For in my inner being I delight in God's law; <sup>23</sup> but I see another law at work in me, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within me. <sup>24</sup> What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body that is subject to death? <sup>25</sup> Thanks be to God, who delivers me through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, I myself in my mind am a slave to God's law, but in my sinful nature a slave to the law of sin.

Jesus Christ also delivers you from the bondage of this "old law" that hangs around.

**Philippians 1:6:**

*Being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.*

It has been said that human nature is like an idol factory that operates constantly.

**1 Corinthians 10:14:**

*Therefore, my dear friends, flee from idolatry.*

When you flee something, what does that indicate? How do you do it?

We are not to associate with those who call themselves Christians but are idolaters:

**1 Corinthians 5:11:**

*But now I am writing to you that you must not associate with anyone who claims to be a brother or sister but is sexually immoral or greedy, an idolater or slanderer, a drunkard or swindler. Do not even eat with such people.*

**Commandment 2:** You shall not make for yourself an image in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. <sup>5</sup>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 parents to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me, <sup>6</sup>but showing love to a thousand generations of those who love me and keep my commandments. (Exodus 20:4-6)

The second commandment prohibits not only idolatry regarding false gods (overlapping with the first commandment); it also forbids making an image of any created thing that we might worship.

**John 4:24:**

*God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in the Spirit and in truth.*

**Romans 1:22 – 23:**

*Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools <sup>23</sup>and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like a mortal human being and birds and animals and reptiles.*

“God’s jealousy is love in action. He refuses to share the human heart with any rival, not because He is selfish and wants us all for Himself, but because He knows that upon that loyalty to Him depends our very moral life... God is not jealous of us: He is jealous *for* us.” (Redpath)

**Commandment 3:** “You shall not misuse the name of the Lord your God, for the Lord will not hold anyone guiltless who misuses his name.” (Exodus 20:7)

There are at least three ways this command is commonly disobeyed:

- *Profanity:* Using the name of God in blasphemy and cursing.
- *Frivolity:* Using the name of God in a superficial, stupid way.
- *Hypocrisy:* Claiming the name of God but acting in a way that disgraces him

This is a commandment every Christian should take seriously.

**Philippians 2:10:**

*...that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth...*

**Colossians 3:17:**

*And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.*

**2 Thessalonians 1:12:**

*We pray this so that the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you, and you in him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.*

**Commandment 4:** “Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. <sup>9</sup>Six days you shall labor and do all your work, <sup>10</sup>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 male or female servant, nor your animals, nor any foreigner residing in your towns. <sup>11</sup>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. (Exodus 20:8-11)

God commanded Israel – and all humanity – to make sure that there was *sacred time* in their life, *separated* time of rest.

**Hebrews 4:9-11:**

*There remains, then, a Sabbath-rest for the people of God; <sup>10</sup>for anyone who enters God's rest also rests from their works, just as God did from his. <sup>11</sup>Let us, therefore, make every effort to enter that rest, so that no one will perish by following their example of disobedience.*

Under the New Covenant, no one is under obligation to observe a Sabbath day.

**Colossians 2:16 – 17:**

*Therefore do not let anyone judge you by what you eat or drink, or with regard to a religious festival, a New Moon celebration or a Sabbath day. <sup>17</sup>These are a shadow of the things that were to come; the reality, however, is found in Christ.*

**Hebrews 4:9 – 10:**

*There remains, then, a Sabbath-rest for the people of God; <sup>10</sup>for anyone who enters God's rest also rests from their works, just as God did from his.*

The rest we enter into as Christians is something to experience every day – the rest of knowing we don't have to work to save ourselves, but our salvation is accomplished in Jesus. Yet we dare not ignore the importance of a day of rest. God has built us so that we *need* one.

So, we've seen how the Ten Commandments are still relevant to our lives under the New Covenant. Can you recite with me the first four of these commandments?

Commandment 1: You shall have no other gods before me.

Commandment 2: You shall not make any idols.

Commandment 3: You shall not misuse the name of the Lord your God.

Commandment 4: Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy.