

God Spoke with Fearful Glory

The Ten Commandments

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Bible Verse: Exodus 19:16-20
Preached on: Sunday, May 16, 2021

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Well, we have this morning the wonderful and fearful privilege of returning to our study of the 10 Commandments and I invite you to turn to the book of Exodus 19 which is where we'll be getting started here this morning. I do want to say just a word of preface to you to help you understand where we're going. This is a little bit more in-house than those of you that are perhaps visiting only for a single time. My intention here with this series on the 10 Commandments, we're going to take our time here. We're not going to rush through this; that will be shown in the fact that we're going to spend four or five introductory messages before we actually start to expound on the 10 Commandments themselves. We're going to take breaks in between some of the sections for a few weeks because it's going to take time to absorb the great significance of what we are going to be seeing in God's word in the coming months. I've spent probably two years on and off preparing this series, I'm still not done with the final messages of it, and that just to give you a sense of the magnitude of what we need to learn and absorb. Because the 10 Commandments are a very serious subject, we're going to treat them seriously, earnestly, and without shortcuts, and I'm just going to trust the Lord to work in your hearts to embrace that and to, you know, to welcome that as we go along because I'm confident that the Lord will bless that over the long haul in a way that he would not if we treated these in a superficial way. To the best of our ability with the help of the Holy Spirit, we will not be superficial in the way that we address God's word on this particular topic especially.

So with that said, with a cheerful spirit, let me say this. It has pleased our Maker and our Judge to give laws to us that would regulate our lives and the manner in which we live. God has revealed himself in his word, the written word, the 66 books of the Bible at least in English there are 66, and also in the incarnate Word, in the Lord Jesus Christ. And God is the one who made each one of us in our mother's womb, he formed us, he shaped us in the depths of the beginnings of our being, and he has laid forth in his word and summarized for us the duty that we have in response to his creative hand in making us. There is a moral duty that comes from the mere existence of being under the creative hand of God that governs and is designed to direct the way that we live. With that said, the 10 Commandments are far more than, their purpose is not to teach us how to be good because we have not the ability to be good, rather they expose to us, they reveal to us our sinful nature in light of the perfect standard of God.

Now that I know for some of you, if not many of you, that's revolutionary to hear the concept that there is actually duty that we have before God, and that's a product of the fact that the 10 Commandments and a proper understanding of them, is not familiar to us in our day for many if not most of us. Well, don't be too quick to dismiss, therefore, the topic because it's new to you and something sounds foreign to your ears. That's a very bad way to approach Scripture, "I'll only accept what's familiar to me. I'll only accept that which is in conformance with my pre-existing desires." That's a really dangerous and bad way to live and historical context will give us a sense of perspective on our own ignorance and lack of prior attention to this portion of Scripture. While the 10 Commandments perhaps are not familiar to us in the Christian church today, beloved, let me assure you that that was not the case to our forefathers in the faith. And just in a brief summary here, the Presbyterian and Westminster Shorter Catechism written in 1647 devotes 41 questions and answers to the 10 Commandments in order to instill and to catechize the people with a proper understanding of the 10 Commandments. You can look that up and find it at Questions 40 to 81 in the Shorter Catechism. Charles Spurgeon adapted the Catechism and in his own Catechism published in 1855, he devotes and explains the 10 Commandments at Questions 41 through 65, so 24 questions given to explain the 10 Commandments in a very helpful Catechism that I commend to you as being consistent with the teaching of our church. So our ignorance of these things is no indication or measure of their importance. The fact that it's not been something of concern to you is not an indication that it is not of great concern to God as we are going to see in our message here today.

The title of today's message is, you find it in your bulletin, is this, "God Spoke with Fearful Glory." God spoke with fearful glory, and one of the reasons that we need to do another introductory message before we expound the 10 Commandments, is that it is essential for us, essential for you and me, to understand the historical context in which the 10 Commandments were given. God delivered the 10 Commandments in a specific way, at a specific time, to a specific people, with a specific purpose, and we need to see that surrounding context in order to have some sense of the weight and gravity that the 10 Commandments carry. To just jump in, to just parachute in and start looking at individual commandments is really to kind of miss the point, and part of our responsibility is to examine the context and that's what we need to do today. Before we study the commandments themselves, we need to consider the background of how God gave them to his people because that context gives us a sense of the significance that God attaches to the 10 Commandments, and the surpassing authority that those moral commandments contain, and to miss that, I'm afraid, it would be to approach the 10 Commandments in a purely academic, somewhat disinterested, uninterested way. When you see the historical commandment, it wakes you up, it's as if you're in the military and a General walks by and you snap to attention and salute because of the authority and the gravity of his position. Well, multiply that by infinity and you see something of the authority of the 10 Commandments and the way that they are to impress their significance upon our hearts.

I'm just going to ask and answer two questions here today in the context, the surrounding context historically of the 10 Commandments. The first question that we're going to ask

is when did God give them, when did God deliver the 10 Commandments and just to kind of get a historical perspective of it. Now as we've talked about many times over recent days both on Tuesday nights as we study through the Psalms and in our approach to the 10 Commandments, God delivered Israel from slavery in Egypt after they had been there for some 400 years. They were in slavery in Egypt far longer than America has been an independent country, just to give us some kind of sense of that. God delivered them with power, he delivered them with 10 plagues upon Egypt that forced Pharaoh to let them go, and they escaped through the Red Sea as we've discussed many times. After that, God speaks to the people in Exodus 19 and explains to them the redemptive significance of what had just happened to them.

So let's look at Exodus 19:1 as a start here. I don't know when I've last enjoyed preaching this much as I am right now, and I always enjoy preaching. This is my favorite passage in the Bible. [laughter] I know, it's an inside joke. Everyone understands that. Every passage that I'm preaching at the moment is my favorite passage in the Bible.

Exodus 19:1, "In the third month after the sons of Israel had gone out of the land of Egypt, on that very day they came into the wilderness of Sinai. When they set out from Rephidim, they came to the wilderness of Sinai and camped in the wilderness; and there Israel camped in front of the mountain." So they're delivered but they're not yet home. "Moses went up to God, and the LORD called to him from the mountain, saying, 'Thus you shall say to the house of Jacob and tell the sons of Israel.'" Then he goes into why the recent events had taken place. Verse 4, "You yourselves have seen what I did to the Egyptians," this is God speaking. "You yourselves have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings, and brought you to Myself. Now then, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be My own possession among all the peoples, for all the earth is Mine; and you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.' These are the words that you shall speak to the sons of Israel."

Now very simple observation based on that text that I want to point out to you here. God gave a physical deliverance to Israel in order to achieve a spiritual end, a spiritual goal. He brought them out from the world of Egypt into a place of their own so that Israel would be a nation that belonged exclusively to him. They were to be a people set apart for the purposes of God. He says there in verse 6, "you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. You shall be those," in other words, "which represent Me to others, that intercede for them and belong to Me." So in what follows in order to establish and to regulate exactly what that relationship with the Lord was to be like – watch this – God gave them laws to govern them as they lived for him. And later on in Exodus after the 10 Commandments, you see all kinds of civil, social laws and ceremonial laws regulating their worship, but before he got to that, he gave them and delivered to them the moral law found in the 10 Commandments.

Now these laws did not become the laws of God, the moral law in Exodus 20, these were permanent pre-existing realities that God simply codified for them in writing in order to make them clear and to keep them from being diminished by their transmission orally from time to time. We will look at that in future days. I just want to make the point this is

not new revelation that is being given in the 10 Commandments, he is simply codifying for them his pre-existing moral standards. And so in that context, God does something very very amazing and remarkable. The 10 Commandments were no ordinary revelation from God, if there is such a thing as ordinary revelation from God. They are distinguished by the magnificent, the majestic, and the solemn way in which God delivered them to his people, how God delivered them to his people, and so much so that the people were commanded before God even gave them the moral law in the 10 Commandments, he commanded them to prepare themselves for the coming event.

Look at Exodus 19:10. I just think this is magnificent Scripture that we are considering here today. I should kick off my shoes because we are standing on holy ground as we read and examine these things this morning. So in Exodus 19:10, you see this, "The LORD also said to Moses," actually let's go back to verse 9, "The LORD said to Moses, 'Behold, I will come to you in a thick cloud, so that the people may hear when I speak with you and may also believe in you forever.' Then Moses told the words of the people to the LORD." Now verse will 10, "The LORD also said to Moses, 'Go to the people and consecrate them today and tomorrow, and let them wash their garments; and let them be ready for the third day, for on the third day the LORD will come down on Mount Sinai in the sight of all the people.'" And so this was such a holy occasion that was about to take place that God commanded the people to take a number of days to prepare for what was about to happen. Okay, and so by setting the time apart and the people setting themselves and their garments apart, as it were, setting themselves apart, it is setting the stage, it is preparing them to recognize that the event for which they are preparing is an event in itself that is greatly set apart, and by showing the nature of the separation and the preparation that it takes.

You know, and already, already we have something that strikes and sobers our heart in the modern day, I'm just going to take a moment here for a little bit of personal application, and I don't care a bit that this is going to offend some of you. I really don't because it's more important for us to understand the importance of what we're studying rather than, you know, to preserve individuals' feelings. God told his people to prepare for the coming of his law. There are people that just find it a pain to get up in the morning to go and be in church on Sunday, and in a complaining way and rubbing their eyes and, "I don't want to be up right now." What kind of preparation of heart and soul and mind is that for coming to hear the word of God? The callous indifference. The callous disregard for the sacred nature of Christian worship, of the proclamation of the word of God is a conviction already in our hearts of these things, and people want to stay up late at night and, you know, and not prepare themselves. As many people have said, Sunday morning in preparation of your heart for Sunday morning, it starts on Saturday night and the way that you order and structure your life so that you are prepared to come into the presence of God under the preaching of his word, and to be able to receive it with a clear, active, engaged, energetic mind, this is the start of preparation, and the way that you conduct your life on Saturday night is an indication of the seriousness that you attach to Sunday morning. And so God takes these matters seriously and he says, "I'm going to give you My word in three days, you need to get ready." And it's not too much for us to make sure that we're rested, that we're getting our proper sleep in preparation for the day, and to

actually make the effort to show up and be here as you fine folks have done here today. This matters.

So the holy event of the delivery of the 10 Commandments was marked by a physical preparation. Now along with that, when God gave the 10 Commandments, the holy event of the giving of the 10 Commandments was marked by a physical separation. A physical separation. Look at verse 12 and there's just, you know, as we read this, there should just be this growing sense of awe and respect and reverence and even fear in your mind as you see what God did to prepare his people for the fearful deliverance of the 10 Commandments. Verse 12, he told Moses, "You shall set bounds for the people all around, saying, 'Beware that you do not go up on the mountain or touch the border of it; whoever touches the mountain shall surely be put to death.'" There was this personal preparation followed by warnings about physical separation because this event was going to be of such significance. And so before God has even spoken, before God has even spoken the 10 Commandments, he has prepared the people with a sense that what is about to happen is an event set apart. This is uniquely different than anything that has come beforehand. This is not common. This is a majestic pedestal of an event at which we will look up with respect and fear. There is a heart preparation that is going on. The physical outward circumstances in which God prepared the people for the deliverance of the law was a means of emphasizing and signifying the great significance that it had in the purpose of God for his people. So you get the idea here and we haven't even gotten to the fearful stuff yet and we're going to get to that in just a moment, but already, already we're finding ourselves challenged by the great holy manner in which God delivered the law and told his people to prepare for it. We are immediately confronted with our superficial and deplorable indifference to the word of God as we see the way that he prepared his people to receive it.

I've told this story in the past about my own personal history. I detest the fact that this was a part of my life before Christ. I remember and part of the reason that I'm energized about preaching this is just that I don't want you to be like me, like what I used to be like, and the utter disdain that I had for the word of God as a college student was expressed in this manner. I didn't even own a Bible. The only real Bible, the only Bible I had was one of those little Gideon New Testaments that somebody had even to me on the street corner at Indiana University one time, and I didn't even read that except for one night, I remember reading it and I cracked it open and I was laying on my bed and I was half asleep, the same thing that I warned you against in your preparation for Sunday, I was half asleep, I think I read like five verses out of the book of Galatians. I had no idea what they meant and personally at that point, I didn't even care. And, oh, does it grieve my heart to remember that I was like this. I am so sorry that I was like this. I read those five verses out of the book of Galatians while I was laying in my bed at the little apartment in which I lived alone, I closed that little Gideon's New Testament and I casually flipped it over onto the dresser, thinking in my mind, "There, God ought to be satisfied with that." The utter contempt for the word of God that I had in my heart at that moment has never thoroughly left my mind as I look back on it with a regenerate mind now. That was a perfect summation of the entire attitude that I had as an unbeliever toward the word of God. I couldn't even sit up in a chair to read it. I read it at the end of the day when I was

tired and not alert. I read such a short amount in maybe 60 seconds, and I casually cast it aside, watched it plop on the counter and congratulated myself on the nice throw that I had made, and I said, "There, God ought to be satisfied with that," as if God were answering to me instead of me answering to God and his revelation in his word.

Do you see the problem? Do you see how this casual contempt and indifference even with an open word of God before you, how casual contempt can define your attitude toward it? That's a real problem. God is holy and his word is true and one day we're going to stand before him as a Judge. Don't you think what he has to say and what his law is toward us is rather something of significance for that coming event? Of course it is, and yet, you know, we resent getting out of bed for it. I don't get it. Well, I get it, it's a manifestation of the dark dead hearts and the contempt that is in our minds for the word of God otherwise we would not respond in this way. Well, God knowing the human heart, tells his people to prepare themselves. It's as though he says, I'm making this somewhat metaphorical here, it's as though he said and thinking about my day in Bloomington, Indiana, it's as though he comes and he tells the people of Israel, "Sit up and pay attention and get your heart ready for what I am about to say." That's the basic idea in colloquial terms for it.

And what happened when the day came? They spent two or three days getting ready, what happened when the day came for his word to be delivered? Well, I'll summarize and then show you in the Scriptures. God came with fearful glory to deliver this law. He came with fearful glory to deliver this law. Look at Exodus 19:16 and the supernatural accompaniment of phenomena in nature gave added witness to the weight that God placed to this occasion. He came with fearful glory and he spoke. Verse 16, "So it came about on the third day, when it was morning, that there were thunder and lightning flashes and a thick cloud upon the mountain and a very loud trumpet sound, so that all the people who were in the camp trembled." The visual assault on them, the audio assault on their ears, the physical sensation of the ground trembling under them caused them all to fear and shake in regards to what was happening. And in verse 17, "Moses brought the people out of the camp to meet God, and they stood at the foot of the mountain."

Now verse 18, "Now Mount Sinai was all in smoke because the LORD descended upon it in fire; and its smoke ascended like the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mountain quaked violently." Have you ever been in a tornado or a hurricane or an earthquake and you realize what's happening and nature is a threat to your existence? That is the sense of fear which accompanied the delivery of God's law. The whole mountain was quaking. In verse 19, it intensified. Verse 19, "When the sound of the trumpet grew louder and louder, Moses spoke and God answered him with thunder. The LORD came down on Mount Sinai, to the top of the mountain; and the LORD called Moses to the top of the mountain, and Moses went up."

Now those are the preliminaries. As we saw last time, the 10 Commandments themselves are found in chapter 20, 1 through 17. Copies of that message are available in the outer lobby if you missed it and want to pick that up. So we see it from God's perspective and what God did just immediately before the 10 Commandments were delivered, and then he

delivers the 10 Commandments in those 17 verses, and afterwards what is the response of the people? Look at verse 18 of chapter 20, "All the people perceived the thunder and the lightning flashes and the sound of the trumpet and the mountain smoking." They took it all in and what was the effect of it? "When the people saw it, they trembled and stood at a distance." They saw these phenomenon, they were literally, literally physically shaking in response to it, and they stood back recognizing the majestic solemnity of what they were witnessing.

Now the point of this, the point of these signs was not simply for the sake of a physical display of fireworks because God could do it, the point of these accompanying natural phenomenon, what I mean is these phenomena in nature, was to give added emphasis to the significance of the moral law that was being delivered to them, to add weight and authority to what God was saying. He testified to it and when God is giving revelation, he's done doing that now in his time of, you know, in the biblical times, when God attested to the authority of the apostles in the New Testament, he gave them power to do signs and wonders that testified to the supernatural truth and revelation that this was really from God. So in Exodus 20, God gives these phenomena in nature to say, "This is really My moral authority and the authority of the moral law is frightful. You are not prepared and equipped to deal with this moral law." The people were afraid and didn't want to draw near. Well, the purpose of God in that was not simply to emphasize and to create fear at the signs, the accompanying signs, the purpose of God in it was to create a fear and respect and reverence for the law that the signs were merely introducing. This is a matter of great consequence that is taking place here.

So when we ask the question when did God give the 10 Commandments, it was immediately after their deliverance from Egypt, three months afterwards, and when he gave it, we see this from the narrative, the supernatural fearful manner in which he did it. That was the context in which the 10 Commandments were given. The fear – listen to me, beloved, with what I'm about to say – the fear which the appearance of God generated at the time outwardly physically, the physical appearance, the physical manifestation of the presence of God did this. Remember, the physical actions had a spiritual significance as we saw from those verses in Exodus 19. The fear which the outward manifestation of God generated does this: it conveys to us the dread authority of the commandments themselves. Let me say that again because this is essential for you to understand. The fear which the outward manifestation of God generated in the people at that time conveys to us the dread authority of the commands themselves. They trembled at the outward manifestation, the point is that when we understand the authority and the implications of the 10 Commandments, it creates a like fear and trembling in us on a spiritual level. Just as they were not equipped to deal with the outward manifestations of God, so now sinful men like you and me, we are not equipped to deal with the spiritual authority of the 10 Commandments. That's what we're supposed to understand.

Look at Deuteronomy 5:22 just to reiterate this. Deuteronomy 5 is where the 10 Commandments were repeated by Moses in his parting message to the people of Israel, and in Deuteronomy 5:22, Moses tells the people later, looking back and interpreting history for them 40 years later, he says, "These words the LORD spoke to all your

assembly at the mountain from the midst of the fire, of the cloud and of the thick gloom, with a great voice, and He added no more. He wrote them on two tablets of stone and gave them to me." God supernaturally inscribed the written version of the 10 Commandments, he inscribed them supernaturally on tablets of stone to establish their permanent and then he gave it to Moses. And Moses tells the people in verse 23, "when you heard the voice from the midst of the darkness, while the mountain was burning with fire, you came near to me, all the heads of your tribes and your elders. You said, 'Behold, the LORD our God has shown us His glory and His greatness, and we have heard His voice from the midst of the fire; we have seen today that God speaks with man, yet he lives. Now then why should we die? For this great fire will consume us; if we hear the voice of the LORD our God any longer, then we will die. For who is there of all flesh who has heard the voice of the living God speaking from the midst of the fire, as we have, and lived?'" They realized that what God had just done showed that his sovereign majesty was such that they could not continue on in life unless there was a mediator, unless God would show grace and mercy to them. And so they plead with Moses to intercede, all in response, here's the point, beloved, trying to keep the main thing the main thing for you here today, all of this simply to show that a supernatural, a powerful God, a holy God gave in a supernaturally great way, in a holy way gave his holy law expressed in the 10 Commandments to his people. All of this supernatural manifestation which created fear in the hearts of the people, there is to be a connection in your mind between that outward authority, that outward fearfulness, and the spiritual significance of the 10 Commandments. So the fear of the appearance of God conveys the dread authority of the commands themselves.

Now this is unique. The manner in which God gave the 10 Commandments distinguishes them from other aspects of the laws that he gave at that same time. The civil law, the social laws that followed in the rest of the book of Exodus, the regulations for the construction of the tabernacle, the ceremonial law given in Leviticus, none of them, none of that revelation was accompanied by this same kind of manifestation of the fearful authority of God. The civil and ceremonial law were not given like that, and so what you are to understand is this, is that there is a unique significance attached to the 10 Commandments that are to impress themselves on your mind. They are unique. Even the way that God gave them, you know, he inscribed them supernaturally himself.

Look at Exodus 31:18. It's just a cool metaphor that I want you to see. Exodus 31:18, the last verse of the chapter just before chapter 32. Verse 18, "When [God] had finished speaking with him upon Mount Sinai, He gave Moses the two tablets of the testimony, tablets of stone, written by the finger of God." Supernaturally inscribed. This was not Moses chiseling them out. God gave him a completed expression written in stone testifying to these 10 Commandments. Everything about it is set apart. Everything about it is set apart. The people, the geography, the signs, the final inscription on the tablets of stone, everything is supernaturally set apart. There is a dread authority to these commandments. And if we can jump ahead into the New Testament, the dread authority of these commandments in our New Testament informed eyes based on what happened 2,000 years or 1,400 years more accurately after these commandments were given to Moses, you see the dread authority of the 10 Commandments in the way that the Father

struck the Son on the cross at Calvary. The authority of God, the authority of these commandments shown in the fact that not even the Son of God could be spared if the people of God were to be redeemed, and that holy, sinless, wonderful person of the Lord Jesus Christ himself was struck so that the violations, the countless violations of the moral law of God by his people could be satisfied. And what happened at the crucifixion? Supernatural signs attesting to it. Darkness and gloom fell upon the land for three hours as Jesus bore the wrath of God and it went supernaturally dark, and tombs were opened and dead people came to life in that whole redemptive weekend. Does this not, I ask you, does this not convict us of our superficial regard for the word of God? Many of you don't even know the 10 Commandments. You wouldn't have known before this series started where to even find them in the Bible. How could it possibly be well with your soul if you're that ignorant and that uninformed and that indifferent to what God has revealed? How could it possibly be right with you in your heart if you've just lived life in utter disregard and a lack of care for these things? How could that possibly be?

Well, you see another aspect of the holiness of all of this. You will recall that Moses when he came down from the mountain, he came down upon Israel and they're dancing around a golden calf that they had prepared with the help of Aaron, they're dancing around this golden calf celebrating this physical object as representing the God who had delivered them in direct violation of the law that God had just given, and in verses 15 and 16 of chapter 32, you see this. We're skipping over a lot of the narrative. "Moses turned and went down from the mountain with the two tablets of the testimony in his hand, tablets which were written on both sides; they were written on one side and the other. The tablets were God's work, and the writing was God's writing engraved on the tablets." Then Moses comes and he sees this awful act of idolatry taking place immediately on the heels of this supernatural revelation, he comes upon them dancing and celebrating this, "It came about," verse 19, "as soon as Moses came near the camp, that he saw the calf and the dancing; and Moses' anger burned, and he threw the tablets from his hands and shattered them at the foot of the mountain. He took the calf which they had made and burned it with fire, and ground it to powder, and scattered it over the surface of the water and made the sons of Israel drink it." There is a man for you. The physical tablets, the breaking of the physical tablets signified the greater breaking of the spiritual law that had just been given to them, and you get a picture, beloved, of the significance of sin in this way. The great majestic way in which the law of God was delivered, the 10 Commandments were delivered, the holiness of that and then the violation and what's the outcome of it? All that majestic holiness, all of the authority of the law of God in the presence of sin shattered. All of that authority has been defied, and what was true nationally is true of each one of us individually. It's a picture of our sinning against the authority of God and the shattering guilt that comes upon us in our rebellion against God. How can it possibly go well? How can it possibly go well in light of that?

Well, God, we won't take the time to look there, God graciously replaced the tablets and he did something else to give a position of esteem and unique authority to the commandments when they were placed in the ark of the covenant. Look at Deuteronomy 10. The covenant was the special box which was placed in the tabernacle. It ultimately came to hold different significant objects from the history of Israel. It was a symbol of

the great presence of God. It was a symbol of something else, and in that great symbol of the presence of God in the ark of the covenant, Moses was commanded to take those stone tablets and place them there in that place of, that holy place that only the priest could approach, placed in there, God told Moses, these 10 Commandments.

Deuteronomy 10:1, "At that time the LORD said to me, 'Cut out for yourself two tablets of stone like the former ones, and come up to Me on the mountain, and make an ark of wood for yourself. I will write on the tablets the words that were on the former tablets which you shattered, and you shall put them in the ark.' So [Moses] made an ark of acacia wood and cut out two tablets of stone like the former ones, and went up on the mountain with the two tablets in my hand." This is Moses speaking, and God "wrote on the tablets, like the former writing, the Ten Commandments which the LORD had spoken to you on the mountain from the midst of the fire on the day of the assembly; and the LORD gave them to me. Then I turned and came down from the mountain and put the tablets in the ark which I had made; and there they are, as the LORD commanded me." That setting them in the ark in that immediate presence of the symbol of the immediate presence of God, shows how tightly connected they are to the presence and authority of God. You can put it this way: God associated the 10 Commandments with the symbol of his very presence. He testifies to the authority of the 10 Commandments by his very presence and sets them apart in a way that commands unique attention from the people of God.

Now I just ask you a summarizing question here. I'm just asking in summary. How great must be the authority and significance of this law, these 10 Commandments, in the eyes of God in light of the way that he gave them to his people? All of the signs and their ultimate destination in the ark and the shattering of them when they were violated, the trembling and fear of the people, this is a moral law that is generating that kind of response and fear. Now look, at some point, at some point someone needs to point out these things and say this is significant. This has consequence for your life and your standing before God and we can't, we can't joke our way through life, a pulpit cannot joke its way through these things and be consistent with the majestic authority that God attached to the 10 Commandments. At some point, beloved, and today is one of those days, there's some point where we've just got to get serious in a manner that is consistent with the serious awe-inspiring way in which God delivered his law. The context matters. The people who were there trembled and if nothing else, their trembling in the event of the deliverance of the law should at the very very least, it goes much farther than this but at the very least, it should be a warning to us that our casual indifference to obedience, to the authority of God's word is a great threat to our souls and it is a symptom that things are not right between you and God if you are that cold and indifferent and you can just sail through life without concern about God's law and your sin. I fear that we've been conditioned over several decades of bad ministry, we've been conditioned over several decades of bad ministry to just lose sight of the holiness of God, the authority of his law, and to just make an unfounded assumption that everything is well with us when it's really not. I know I'm right about that. I know that I'm right about this false confidence and this false assurance because Jesus himself warned about it. He said, "Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not...'" And he'll say, "I never knew you. Depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness, you who have lived your life in an utter disregard to the

moral law of God, depart from Me. I don't know you. The one who knows Me, the one who loves Me is the one who keeps My commandments."

Now I know that there are some who are hearing this or who will hear it and who just resent it. "Don't tell me there's something wrong with me. Who do you think you are? You're a sinner too." Yeah, I freely acknowledge that but today you can't be like me, the 40 years ago me that just casually tossed it aside and said, "Well, that doesn't really matter. That's not really that important." I suppose you can do that. I can't stop you from responding to God's word that way, but understand that the whole weight and testimony is against that kind of response and dismissal. God spoke with fearful glory and the wise man is the one who takes that to heart, the wise woman is the one who takes that to heart.

Now why did God give them? We answered the first question, when did God give them? Secondly, why did God give them? Well, the answer to that question is seen in what's called the preface to the 10 Commandments in the first two verses of Exodus 20. Turn there with me. We won't spend much time on this now because we'll be picking up on it later, I suppose. Why did God give the 10 Commandments? Well, look at the preface in the first two verses of Exodus 20. The first commandment is found in verse 3, there's a preface that is given to it there. "Then 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.'" Why did God give them? We see that, first of all, he gave them as an expression of his authority, his right and prerogative to command his people. It says there in verse 2, "I am the LORD your God. I am God. I am authority over you. I am Yahweh and I speak from My authority as your God," he says to them.

God has the right to command and his people owe him their obedience but more than just raw power is at stake here. The 10 Commandments, for all of the fearful deliverance of it, the 10 Commandments are ultimately an expression of grace, of undeserved favor. Look at verse 2 again with me, "I am the LORD your God." This unworthy people has this worthy God as theirs. This is an expression of grace in keeping with what God had said earlier in chapter 19, "You will be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation." The God of grace had called an unworthy people to his side and would be their God, as the progress of revelation goes, you see it in the Psalms, would be their redeemer, their defender, their shield, their shepherd, their fortress.

This is incomprehensibly great and there's authority, there's grace, and there's a memorial aspect to it in verse 2. Look at it there with me again, "I brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery." The 10 Commandments are a reminder of the redemption of the people of God, the redemption of Israel. Arthur Pink in his little brief book on the 10 Commandments where he quotes, he draws heavily from prior writers without attribution, that's okay. Arthur Pink said this, "The law proceeded from God as a clear expression of His character as both the gracious Redeemer and the righteous Lord of His people."

Now I'm going to cover what I'm about to say in a full subsequent message weeks from now. There are those who would say, "Well, this is all just directed to Israel. It has no

application to Gentiles." That's really bad theology and it's completely incorrect. This moral law of God was obviously and clearly enforced before it was given and it was enforced and understood by other nations, as you see as you study Scripture in the book of Genesis beforehand. You see its authority now in the fact that the New Testament in one way or another refers to all 10 of these commandments. This is not something that can be marginalized and that your conscience can evade. This is so important to understand. You cannot evade the authority of this by saying, "Well, this was just Israel." You interpret the 10 Commandments in light of all of Scripture and all of Scripture points to the fact that there is a universal applicable authority to all men that is found in these 10 Commandments, so much so that Romans 2 says that the law is written on the hearts of those who have never even heard it. God imprints it on conscience.

So we're all under this moral authority of the word of God, and what God did was he spoke with fearful glory to instill the fear of God in us. We looked at it already but look at chapter 20, verse 20 again. "Moses said to the people, 'Do not be afraid,'" in other words, this is not going to be the end of you, "for God has come in order to test you, and in order that the fear of Him may remain with you, so that you may not sin." There is a restraining effect of the evil of the hearts of men that is exposed in the 10 Commandments and the moral law restrains the evil that's in men's heart.

We'll see in future days why that is true but let me just kind of bring the plane in for a landing here and to summarize things and to give a preview of coming attractions, you might say. What the law of God does, what the 10 Commandments do is this, the 10 Commandments expose your sin and they expose my sin to us. As we go through and study them and understand and you, as it were, you view your life in a mirror which is the 10 Commandments, it reflects back to you the sin and the wickedness and the disobedience of all of your life in your prior, you know, and the sin that's in your heart. It exposes it. It comes as a spotlight, it comes as a flashlight and shines on the darkness of your heart and makes it undeniable in a way, and makes that obvious to you. It exposes our sin with a spiritual purpose, not as a final end in itself, not as a final goal simply to convict, but to take you further. The law exposes your sin to make you despair over your guilt, your undeniable guilt. "All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." But pride is so bound up in the human heart that it denies that and asserts its own innocence, asserts its own goodness, asserts its own sufficiency to enter into the presence of God at death, and so deeply rooted is that sinful pride in the human heart that it takes nothing less than a fearful authority of the law of God to expose it and to break it with the illuminating work of the Holy Spirit.

Friends, you were guilty at birth with inherited sin. You are guilty by choices of your own sinful making, and you are guilty by divine verdict if you are not in Christ. And when the law that came in such a fearful way produces that kind of convicting work in your heart, you realize that you're utterly undone. There's a good purpose in that. There is a gracious purpose in that because the law is designed to so convince you of your sin that you turn in desperation saying, "Where is there a Savior? Where is there a Mediator? Where is the Moses that can mediate between me and God just as Moses mediated for the people of Israel before the holiness of God? Who can mediate for me because I cannot

bear this holy weight by myself? I can't bear it at all." Then, beloved, then the gospel of Christ enters in. Then the gospel of Christ enters in and offers free forgiveness to those who believe. Then the gospel of Christ comes in and says their God in addition to supplying the law, has supplied a Mediator who satisfied everything that the law demands, fulfilled all of its requirements, paid all of its penalties, and is willing to share his perfect righteousness, share his cleansing blood with everyone who will come to him in humble repentant faith and confess him as their Lord and their Savior.

The somewhat forgotten, in some circles, theologian Robert Dabney in his systematic theology, he said this. It's a really good, that's a really good book. He said, "By showing us our penal debt and the high terms of obedience which are impossible for the sinner to fulfill, it prepares his soul to submit to the righteousness of the Redeemer." This plowing work of God in the field of your heart is designed to break up the soil so that rather than the hardened soil that existed before, as did in my heart, the law of God comes, digs up the field of your heart, so to speak, so that it is prepared and ready to receive the good seed, the good seed of the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. But it is a fatal mistake for Christians, for churches, for pastors, to just kind of soar past and do a quick overview and a quick flyby of the 10 Commandments because this takes time for that work to take place in us. But the pattern is this, we see the law and its authority, we see its law and convicting power in an undeniable way and say, "Absolutely. God, You're right. I agree with You. Your law convicts me. I am not what You require me to be." And then from that point, then the message that Christ died for sinners, then the message that there is a Savior, there is a Mediator, there is a Redeemer who can take you out of spiritual slavery and bring you graciously without your merit into his kingdom, then the gospel is sweet.

So we see the law and then we see our need for Christ. Beloved, here at Truth Community Church, we've taken a couple of steps on the journey so far. We do so in fear of what the law says, we do it in hope of the words of our blessed Savior found in John 7 when he said, "If anyone is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me as the Scripture said, from his innermost being will flow rivers of living waters."

Let's pray together.

God, we honor Your majesty as it is expressed in Your moral law. We confess that we fall short of everything that it requires. Individually and collectively, we are sinners before You and we thank You, Father, that You gave the law in order to convict and convince us of our need for Christ, our need of a Savior, and then, Father, You went further and graciously supplied that Savior in the person of Your own Son. God, how majestic is all of this taken together? Our minds cannot possibly wrap itself around all of the majesty and wonder of this, and so we ask for the help of Your Holy Spirit to help us and illuminate all of these things for us in coming days in a way that we could never achieve on our own.

Father, for the false Christian just like I used to be, O God, walking in false assurance and pride and spiritual arrogance with a cold indifferent heart to Your word and to Your Christ, Father, convince men and women that are like that. We ask You, we beg You, we

plead with You to do that kind of work and to rescue them while there is still time. And for those that have had no regard for You, Father, may You awaken them as well and lead those to Christ, to true saving faith in Christ for the very first time.

And Father, for those of us that are Christians, help us to see with greater clarity especially in coming weeks as we study these things further, the wonder of the fact that though we shattered the law of God as Moses shattered the stones, our lives have shattered the authority of Your word, O God, help us in light of that recognition to realize how great the work of Christ is on our behalf, that He kept the law perfectly, that He paid the penalty that the law requires, the shedding of blood which we could never do, and may it make Christ precious to us as we understand better what He has done, how He has answered the law on our behalf, and then, Father, may it make us desire sanctification and conformity that we would live lives that are in keeping with what You require, not to earn our salvation but because they express what Your will for Your people is, and how You would have us to think, speak, and live. We ask for nothing less, Father, than all of these things and we pray, O God, God, we pray in humble desperation knowing that the days are evil and the time is short, we pray that You would do exceeding abundantly beyond all that we could ask or think according to the power that works within us, to Your glory, to the glory of Jesus Christ, to the glory of Your Spirit who takes these things and applies them to our hearts. Father, we ask for an opening of heaven, as it were, such a work of Your Spirit that it would be as though the heavens were opened and poured down upon us and upon this congregation not with the fear of natural wonders but, Father, with the fruit of changed hearts and lives and sinners coming to Christ in repentant faith and new birth taking place in many places and in many hearts. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

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