

Subject: God's Moral Law – The First Commandment

Scripture: Exodus 20:1-17

In our first sermon we identified three kinds of law: natural laws that govern the physical world (like gravity); civil laws that govern human life (like speed limits and laws that protect life and property); and moral laws that govern the spiritual world (like the Ten Commandments and the law of sowing and reaping).

A person may be ignorant of these laws or dislike them, but that doesn't eliminate the consequences of violating them. Most people are aware of natural and civil laws and therefore align their behavior with them. But when it comes to God's moral laws that's not true. Many people are unaware of God's moral law as found in the Ten Commandments. What's worse, they are unconcerned about violating God's laws and incurring His judgment. It also seems that too many Christians fail to understand the importance of God's law.

The purpose of God's moral law

- 1) To reflect God's character
- 2) To restrain sin
- 3) To reveal sin

God's law is like a mirror or an MRI that shows us the darkness and dirt hidden in our hearts, the sin that separates us from a holy God. Without a sense that we need to be saved, we have no way of knowing how desperately we need a Savior.

For the law to fulfill its role in revealing our sin and convicting us of it, it must convict us of specific sins and not just sin in general. To say, "I'm a sinner" may mean little more than "I'm not perfect." But it is far different to admit, "I am an idolater, a murderer, an adulterer, a thief, and so on." When God's law does its work, it will convince us that we are guilty of breaking each and every commandment. The law is our schoolmaster to bring us to Christ so we will call upon Him for mercy.

God's law is different than human law. Human law concerns itself with outward actions alone, because human beings can't see into the hearts of others. But God can see the heart, and so His law deals with attitudes and motives as well as actions. That's why Jesus taught that not only is it wrong to murder; it's wrong to be angry and hate someone. Jesus taught that God's law not only forbids adultery, but also lust.

In this message we are looking at the first commandment in **Exodus 20:3** *Thou shalt have no other gods before me.* The first commandment begins where we would expect it to begin—with the truth about God and our worship of God. Everything in our life depends on our view of God.

"What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us."
- A. W. Tozer

1. We must have the one true God

"Thou" is singular. It means you personally and individually rather than corporately, and so it is will all the commandments. These commands must be kept by every person.

A. Who is the one true God?

Exodus 20:1-2 ¹ And God spake all these words, saying, ² I am the LORD thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.

This command was first given to the Jews who came out of Egyptian bondage, but it applies to all people. He is the Creator, the God of Noah, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. He is the God of Moses and Aaron and the nation of Israel. He is Jehovah, the great I AM, the self-existent One, the self-sufficient One, the eternal One, the living God, the unchanging God, the all-wise God, the God of heaven and earth, the only true God. The first commandment is based on God's uniqueness (older writers "solitariness"). There is no one like God.

B. How do we know there is only one true God?

We know because God says so.

Deuteronomy 4:39 Know therefore this day, and consider it in thine heart, that the LORD he is God in heaven above, and upon the earth beneath: there is none else.

Isaiah 45:5 I am the LORD, and there is none else, there is no God beside me...

Isaiah 45:22 Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else.

John 17:3 And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.

1 Timothy 2:5 For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.

C. What does it mean to have the one true God?

- To know Him and acknowledge Him as God

1 Kings 8:22-23 ²² And Solomon stood before the altar of the LORD in the presence of all the congregation of Israel, and spread forth his hands toward heaven: ²³ And he said, LORD God of Israel, there is no God like thee, in heaven above, or on earth beneath, who keepest covenant and mercy with thy servants that walk before thee with all their heart.

1 Kings 18:39 And when all the people saw it, they fell on their faces: and they said, The LORD, he is the God; the LORD, he is the God.

We must know Him in His attributes, in His Word, and in His Son.

- To choose Him and serve Him as God

Joshua 24:15 And if it seem evil unto you to serve the LORD, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD.

It is one thing for our mind to acknowledge God; it is another thing for our will to choose Him and serve Him.

- To enter into covenant with Him as God

This is what happens in salvation. We come into a saving relationship with Him, and we renew this covenant in the Lord's Supper. Remember what Jesus said to His disciples: "This cup is the new covenant in my blood."

- To reverence and fear Him as God

Psalms 89:7 *God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints, and to be had in reverence of all them that are about him.*

Proverbs 9:10 *The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom: and the knowledge of the holy is understanding.*

- To trust Him as God

Proverbs 3:5-6 ⁵ *Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding.* ⁶ *In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.*

Psalms 62:8 *Trust in him at all times; ye people, pour out your heart before him: God is a refuge for us. Selah.*

- To love Him as God

Matthew 22:37 *Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.*

- To worship and obey Him as God

This is what it means to have Him as our God.

2. We must have no other gods

Thou shalt have no other gods "before me" (besides me or over against me). God is a jealous God. He will have no rivals and no competition.

We can break the first commandment in many ways.

First of all, atheists break it because they say there is no God.

Psalms 14:1 *The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God. They are corrupt, they have done abominable works, there is none that doeth good.*

Agnostics break it because they say we can't know for sure if there is a god.

Polytheists break it because they believe in many gods. Israel was surrounded by polytheism or the belief in many gods (in Egypt and in Canaan). Israel's uniqueness was based on God's uniqueness. He is the one and only God and they knew Him and served Him.

But there are other ways to break this command. We break it when we love anyone or anything more than God or serve anything more than God or trust in anything more than God.

We break it when we give anyone or anything first place instead of God. It means “Thou shalt not have any substitute gods.”

1 Timothy 6:17 Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not highminded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy.

One more thing we should realize. To believe in one God is not enough. Even the devil and his demons believe in one God.

James 2:19 Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble.

We must realize there is only one God and we have sinned against Him. He sent His Son Jesus into this world to rescue us and redeem us from our sins. He lived a perfect life and died as a perfect sacrifice to take our sins away, but we must be truly sorry for our sins, turn from our sins, and transfer our trust to Christ as our Lord and Savior. We must be willing to obey Him as our Master.