



Deuteronomy 4:44-5:6 Introduction to the Ten Commandments

5 These are the testimonies, the statutes, and the judgments which Moses spoke to the children of Israel after they came out of Egypt,

46 on this side of the Jordan, in the valley opposite Beth Peor, in the land of Sihon king of the Amorites, who dwelt at Heshbon, whom Moses and the children of Israel defeated after they came out of Egypt.

47 And they took possession of his land and the land of Og king of Bashan, two kings of the Amorites, who were on this side of the Jordan, toward the rising of the sun,

48 from Aroer, which is on the bank of the River Arnon, even to Mount Sion (that is, Hermon),

49 and all the plain on the east side of the Jordan as far as the Sea of the Arabah, below the slopes of Pisgah.

NKJ Deuteronomy 5:1 And Moses called all Israel, and said to them: "Hear, O Israel, the statutes and judgments which I speak in your hearing today, that you may learn them and be careful to observe them.

2 "The LORD our God made a covenant with us in Horeb.

3 "The LORD did not make this covenant with our fathers, but with us, those who are here today, all of us who are alive.

4 "The LORD talked with you face to face on the mountain from the midst of the fire.

5 "I stood between the LORD and you at that time, to declare to you the word of the LORD; for you were afraid because of the fire, and you did not go up the mountain. He said:

6 ' I am the LORD your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.

Just before we went on vacation I happened to catch a Christian movie called *Time changer*. I generally don't have great expectations when it comes to Christian movies, but this one wasn't that bad. In the movie a Seminary professor in the 19th century is about to publish a book in which he advocates the teaching of good Christian morals without necessarily telling people about Christ or the gospel. His colleague then gives him an opportunity to see how well a program of moralism alone works by traveling forward to our time. I won't give away the end of the movie, but needless to say he learns that attempting to enforce morals without the gospel – something that actually became the fashion in the 19th and early 20th centuries in this country doesn't work at all.

1) *The law of God is powerless without the lawgiver*

In other words, you don't have Christian ethics without Christianity. If we attempt to disconnect the law of God from god and teach people to obey his commandments without loving our believing in him, a theory called *behavior modification*, we will fail every time.

It fails on two counts

1) *First, it ignores what God himself desires:* it ignores the fact that as we have seen, Christianity is a heart religion based upon a personal relationship with the living God. God does not want slavish

obedience, he wants loving children

2) *Second, it is impossible for a man who does not believe in God and has not been born again to obey his commandments: As Romans 8:7 states it: "Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be. 8 So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God."*

In other words, no man can obey the law perfectly and no one will even desire to obey it without the new (circumcized) heart that God gives through regeneration.

Law alone will never be enough to create a wholesome or a "good" society, the best we will ever be able to achieve is a little behavior modification that works only when pressure is being applied. The best thinkers in the past have recognized this, Robert Winthrop a past speaker of the house rightly said: *"Men, in a word, must necessarily be controlled either by a power within them or by a power without them; either by the word of God or by the strong arm of man: either by the Bible or by the bayonet."*

The law will only be obeyed if there is a heart desire to obey it, that is why as parents we want children who love their parents and actively desire to obey their commandments, not simply children who fear the wrath of an angry lawgiver.

2) The Law can never be disconnected from grace, redemption, and the covenant.

That is why the Lord first roots his commands in his redemption, and his covenant. The law wasn't simply dictated in a vacuum. Rather the Lord God himself gave these commandments to the people that he had redeemed by his power out of bondage and slavery. So many people fundamentally MISUNDERSTAND the law of God, it is not "obey the law in order to be saved" it is actually obey the law, because you have been saved. Obedience is rooted in redemption. The law does not redeem us, it teaches the redeemed how to live in light of that fact. The people of Israel were saved by grace, God did not love them because of their obedience, he loved them because he loved them.

So what is said of believers in Eph. 2:8-10 applies to believers in all times: "8 For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God,

9 not of works, lest anyone should boast. 10 For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them." The people are to hear these commands that they might do them.

Deut. 30:4 "If any of you are driven out to the farthest parts under heaven, from there the LORD your God will gather you, and from there He will bring you.

5 "Then the LORD your God will bring you to the land which your fathers possessed, and you shall possess it. He will prosper you and multiply you more than your fathers.

6 "And the LORD your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your descendants, to love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, that you may live.

Paul picks up on this theme in *Romans 2:28 For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh;*

29 but he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the Spirit, not in the letter; whose praise is not from men but from God.

Ezek. 36:24 "For I will take you from among the nations, gather you out of all countries, and bring you

into your own land.

25 "Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols.

26 "I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh.

27 "I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them.

Not with our fathers (Deut. 5:2), this is what is called a case of relative negation "not only... but also" the importance is that the covenant wasn't just given to their fathers, who subsequently died, this is covenant made with every generation of believers. They were just as much partners in the covenant as their forefathers. These laws are eternal and universal. This law was also the law that Adam failed to keep, the law that was violated when he ate from the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, the law that was violated when Cain killed Abel. The giving of the law here and on Mt. Sinai was not an *iteration* but a *reiteration*. This law binds all men, always has and always will, that is why, for instance, you can and should use it in your evangelism. What we have here therefore is a covenant renewal.

The Lord spoke with them face to face, it is worth noting that even when the Lord speaks to his people via a mediator (Moses) if he delivers the Lord's words faithfully, the Lord is speaking to his people.

3) Therefore, it is critical therefore to understanding the Moral Law, or the Ten Commandments, that we understand what has historically been called, the three-fold use of the law

The first use of the law is pedagogical use, Gal. 3:24 "Therefore the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith."

The Second use of the law is its CIVIC USE in restraining evil. God's law should be the nucleus or framework for the laws of human societies

The Third use is didactic or Normative in the life of the Christian. As the Westminster Confession of Faith puts it: "Although true believers be not under the law, as a covenant of works, to be thereby justified, or condemned; yet is it of great use to them, as well as to others; in that, as a rule of life informing them of the will of God, and their duty, it directs and binds them to walk accordingly;"

Modern Christians often fail to understand how it is that the longest Psalm in the book of Psalms (119) could be an extended contemplation of the law of God in which the psalmist expresses his delight again and again, but the fact is the law is a delight to those who truly Love god, because it expresses his character and holiness and shows what loving obedience to Him should look like. For all the reasons the law is a delight to the believer, it should cause terror to the unbeliever. It reveals the holiness and perfection of God and they see in it a mirror showing them their lack and need. It should drive them to the gospel. (Samuel Bolton quote).

"The Law sends us to the gospel to learn how to be saved because the law cannot save you, and the gospel sends us back to the law to learn how to live."

These ten commandments are at the heart of all the other laws - they fall into two tables: 1-4 express man's duties to God, while 5-10 express man's consequent duties to man:

Matt. 22:37 Jesus said to him, " 'You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.'

38 "This is the first and great commandment.

39 "And the second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.'

Today you are once again confronted with the eternal law of God, and your relationship to that law will depend entirely upon your relationship to Jesus Christ. If you do not know Christ as your savior, the one who paid the penalty of the law for you and has kept it perfectly on your behalf, then the law looms over you, it proves your guilt and condemns you. There is no "FOURTH USE OF THE LAW" as a way of being saved.

If on the other hand you do know Jesus as your Savior, then you have that new heart spoken of in Ezek 36, you have been given the Holy Spirit and you have a new will and the ability to walk in conformity with Christ's commandments. Not perfectly, never perfectly on this side of death, none-the-less. If you love the Lord, like the Psalmist, you will love his law, that perfect expression of his nature.

*1 Peter 1:13 Therefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and rest your hope fully upon the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ;
14 as obedient children, not conforming yourselves to the former lusts, as in your ignorance;
15 but as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct,
16 because it is written, "Be holy, for I am holy."*