

**92. Q. What is the law of the LORD?
(quotes Exodus 20)**

Read Matthew 5:17-20

What does it mean that your righteousness must exceed that of the scribes and Pharisees?

Well, first, how righteous were the scribes and Pharisees?

Jesus goes on to contrast their "righteousness" with true righteousness:

vv21-26--they taught that "you shall not murder"

 simply meant literal killing

 Jesus shows that the Law includes the heart

 Jesus says that the 6th Commandment forbids anger

vv27-32--they taught that "you shall not commit adultery"

 simply meant literal adultery

 Jesus shows that the Law includes the heart

 Jesus says that the 7th commandment forbids lust.

In vv33-37, Jesus teaches that the Pharisees

 have misunderstood the Law's teaching on oaths,

vv38-48 that the Pharisees have misunderstood the law of Love (Lev. 19:18),

6:1-17 makes it clear that in charity, prayer, and fasting,

 the Pharisees are nothing but hypocrites.

Jesus is not making up a new Law here.

 He explicitly had said back in 5:17-18 (read)

Jesus is teaching the Jews that the Pharisees were leading them astray.

 The Pharisees were not righteous;

 they were hypocrites.

 They claimed that they kept the Law,

 but in reality, they broke the Law constantly.

In Matthew 15:3, Jesus charges that the Pharisees

 break the commandments of God for the sake of following their own traditions.

The Pharisees **claimed** to be righteous, but Jesus shows them up for a bunch of frauds.

So what does it mean that your righteousness must exceed that of the scribes and Pharisees?

 Read 5:19

Jesus is not talking about perfection.

 He is talking about the character or disposition of our lives.

 Are we the sort of people who love God's law?

 Are we the sort of people who repent when we fail?

 Are we the sort of people who seek to obey his commandments?

 Are we the sort of people who trust in Christ for the grace to obey?

The Pharisees weren't.

That is why our righteousness must exceed theirs.

If we live our lives like the Pharisees,
then we will never enter the kingdom of heaven.

That's actually what Moses is talking about back in Deuteronomy 5.

The way to find blessing in the kingdom of heaven--the Promised Land,
is to walk in God's ways, and live according to his commandments.

4:44 opens our passage:

"Now this is the Law--the Torah--which Moses set before the children of Israel"

Torah is the Hebrew word for Law.

But Torah means MORE than just Law.

Torah means direction and instruction,

When Proverbs tells children to listen to their parents' instruction,
it reads, "listen to your parents' TORAH"

So Torah is not just a legal code for judges to administer,

but Torah also is the instruction which a father gives to his children

So if Deuteronomy is a large catechism for parents to use to train their children,

Deuteronomy 5 is the shorter catechism!

Deuteronomy 5 summarizes the whole book

and gives us the gist of what God wants HIS children to understand.

So Torah is instruction;

it is also direction.

Torah--particularly the 10 Commandments--gives us direction for our lives.

It tells us what God likes, and what he doesn't like.

It tells us what God will bless, and what he will curse.

This is why the Psalm 119 can go on for 176 verses

about how wonderful God's Law--God's Torah--is.

Because God's Torah was given to his people as a blessing.

Without God's Law, we would have no idea what God expects of us.

Probably some of you are asking,

"If the Law is so good, then why does Paul attack the Law so vigorously?"

Good question.

But Paul does not attack the LAW,

he attacks those who believe that the WORKS OF THE LAW can save them.

Listen to Paul's description of the PURPOSE of the Law in Gal. 3:19

19 Why then the law? It was added because of transgressions, until the offspring should come to whom the promise had been made, and it was put in place through angels by an intermediary.

20 Now an intermediary implies more than one, but God is one.

21 Is the law then contrary to the promises of God? Certainly not! For if a law had been given that could give life, then righteousness would indeed be by the law. 22 But the Scripture imprisoned everything under sin, so that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe.

Kept in its proper place, Paul thinks that the law is wonderful!
Paul understands that the law cannot save anyone--it never could.
But Paul also understands that the law was given for a good reason:
 It was given because we are sinners.
 And until God sent his Son to be the final mediator of the covenant,
 he needed something else to mediate;
 something which could give his Torah--his instruction, his direction--
 to his people until Christ came.
And so he gave his Torah to Moses,
 and the Torah--the Law--gave direction and instruction to the Israelites.
But just as Moses failed as a mediator,
 so also the Law failed as a mediator.
Neither one could provide our ultimate salvation.
 Now that doesn't mean that the Law is bad,
 just like it doesn't mean that Moses was bad.
 Both did PRECISELY what God intended for them to do.
Moses brought the Israelites to the border of the Promised Land.
The Law directed the Israelites to seek for the Promised Seed.

But the moment that you trust in Moses to bring you into the Land,
 you have fallen into idolatry.
The moment that you trust the LAW to bring you righteousness,
 you have fallen into idolatry.

And later in Galatians 5:13, Paul says,
13 For you were called to freedom, brothers. Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for
the flesh, but through love serve one another. 14 For the whole law is fulfilled in one word: "You
shall love your neighbor as yourself." (again quoting Lev. 19:18)

What does Paul do when he wants to tell the Galatians how to live in liberty?
 He quotes the Law!
Law and liberty are not opposed to each other.
 And they come together in the person of Jesus Christ.

Christ, after all, IS the Torah of God
Christ IS the final Word--direction/instruction--from the Father to his children.
 Just like when we read about Moses, we are to see how he points us to Christ,
 So also, when we read the Law we are to see Christ there.
Because the Law is NOT something hanging over our heads,
 the Law is NOT going to pounce on us when we fail.
That already happened to Christ.
 The Law is no longer against us.
 Christ took the curse of the Law upon himself,
 so that the blessing of the Law might be for us.

The curse of the Law is death for those who disobey.
The blessing of the Law is life for those who walk in God's ways.
Christ took the curse we deserve,
so that we might receive the blessing he deserves.

Let's briefly look at three things about the Ten Commandments:

- 1) What is the foundation of the Ten Commandments?
- 2) What is the purpose of the Ten Commandments?
- 3) How are the Ten Commandments divided?

1) What is the foundation of the 10 Commandments?

v6

Even the Law is built upon grace.

God does not say,

if you obey my commandments, then I'll save you from Egypt.

He says,

since I've saved you from slavery, walk in my ways.

He says to us,

since I've saved you from sin and death, walk in my ways.

Grace comes first--God rescues us from slavery, and makes us his children;
and only then he calls us to live like it.

But notice how Moses brings this truth home to the Israelites.

After all, it had been forty years since God had spoken at Sinai.

These folks had been wandering in the wilderness all their lives.

Did the covenant still apply to them?

Moses says in vv2-4...

This covenant is FOR US!

It is not merely for our fathers.

Moses says that the covenant is not merely something which happened back then,
the covenant is God's speaking to us today!

The Lord talked with YOU face to face on the mountain from the midst of the fire...

You--who are alive here today--he spoke to you.

I can just see a young Israelite saying,

"wait a second Moses, I wasn't even alive back then.

How can you say that God spoke to me."

And Moses would say,

Because God's covenant is not limited by time.

When God speaks, he speaks to you.

The Ten Commandments which he spoke,
are given to you!

In v22 Moses points out that God only spoke THESE words to the people.

The rest of the statutes and judgments he taught to Moses privately.

But these 10 words--these 10 commandments--were spoken by God directly.

God's covenant actions happen in time,
but they have consequences that run through time.

And throughout history,
the Israelites would continue to renew the covenant.
Joshua, David, Solomon, Hezekiah, Josiah, Ezra--all held covenant renewals,
where the people repented of their sins,
and pledged to remember the covenant of God,
and then they celebrated a feast--a covenant meal--
where they gave thanks for the great redemption which God had given them.

That is what we do every Sunday:

Every Sunday we gather on the Lord's Day to renew the covenant:
we hear the Word of God,
we repent of our sins,
we receive his forgiveness,
we pledge ourselves to walk in God's ways,
and we receive God's blessing.

This is one reason why the apostles and the early church
had the Lord's Supper every Sunday
--because it is the covenant meal,
in which we remember Christ's sacrifice,
and participate in his death and resurrection.

Jesus himself started this with the great covenant renewal at the Last Supper,
when he said:

 this cup IS the new covenant in my blood...

So every time we gather together in the name of the Lord Jesus,
we are renewing the covenant together.

We are confessing that God has made his covenant with US,
and that we are trusting in the redemption
which God has accomplished for us in Christ Jesus.

So we've seen that the Law is grounded in redemption--in grace--in God's covenant with US.

2) What are the Ten Commandments doing? What are they for?

What happens to the two tablets of stone?

 God writes the Ten Commandments on the stone,
 and they are placed in the ark of the covenant.

We are told that all the other laws are written in a book and placed BESIDE the ark (31:24-6)

 The ark is called the ark of the covenant, or ark of the testimony,
 because the Ten Commandments are placed inside it.

The ark is placed in the Holy of Holies--the very center of the tabernacle,
 The place where God would meet with Moses.

 Why?

Because the ark contains the covenant Law of God.

 When you look at the ark,

the ark is a box with two cherubim on the lid facing each other.
Now, God has declared that heaven is his throne,
and that earth is his footstool.
What place on earth is the picture of that?
The Holy of Holies.
The ark is God's footstool.
That's why there is no image in the Holy of Holies,
That's why there is an empty space in between the two cherubim on the ark.
They need to leave plenty of room for God's feet to rest!

Well, what are the cherubim doing?
If you look at Ezekiel and Isaiah,
whenever God appears, the cherubim appear as well.
They are the guardians of the throne room.
Even as they had guarded the way into the garden of Eden after man sinned,
so also they guarded the way into the holy of holies.

So the ark is the footstool of God,
and the Ten Commandments are the most significant thing in the ark.
What does this tell us about the Ten Commandments?

- 1) provides a system for orderly, proper, righteous living within God's kingdom;
If you want to know how God orders his kingdom,
and what he thinks is righteous,
read the Ten Commandments.
- 2) it expresses the character of God, and provides for communion with God;
If you want to know what God is like.
If you want to understand how to have communion with him.
read the Ten Commandments.
- 3) expresses the judgment of God against disobedience, and blessing for obedience.
If you want to know how to please God,
or if you want to know how to really make him angry!
read the Ten Commandments.

Okay, so that's what the Law is doing,
but how does the law point us to Christ?
Well, what is Christ doing?

Christ

- 1) provides through his and apostles' teaching
a system for orderly, proper, righteous living within God's kingdom.
Christ fulfills the Law.
- 2) reveals the character of God and opens the way
to new depth of communion with God.
Christ fulfills the Law

3) suffers the awesome judgment of God and brings blessing to his people.
Christ fulfills the Law

So Jesus finishes the job which the Ten Commandments began.

This is why we can never read the Ten Commandments apart from Christ.

He does not abolish them,

but he fulfills them,

he gives them their true meaning and purpose,

because he is the covenant mediator

who is not merely a servant in the house, but the Son over the house,

who is not merely a subject of the king, but the King himself.

So, first, the Ten Commandments are grounded in God's grace;

second, they point us to Christ through

teaching us kingdom righteousness,

revealing the character of God,

and offering kingdom blessings.

And finally 3)

93. Q. How are these commandments divided?

A. Into two parts. The first teaches us how to live in relation to God; the second, what duties we owe our neighbour.

The Ten Commandments start with three commandments about our relationship to God;

then gives us a transitional commandment--the Sabbath--

which includes our relationships both with God and others;

and then gives us five commandments about our relationships with others,

before concluding with a commandment that focuses on the heart.

You might say that the Commandments start in the Holy of Holies (no other gods),

and then moves through the tabernacle--insisting that our worship be pure--

then it moves to how we think about time and authority,

how we relate to our neighbors,

and finally down to the heart.

There is no escaping the Law of God. It relates to every aspect of life.

In conclusion I would like to offer ten applications(!):

1) Any competition with God introduces disorder and chaos, and leads to death--all sin is idolatry--don't allow anything to compete with your love for God!

2) don't pretend to worship the true God through images (cf. 4:15-20)--If I stand up here and preach Christ--yet seek the applause of men, I am guilty of the second commandment.

3) protect the holiness of God's name--which is the revelation of his character

4) imitate God's order of work and rest/preserve distinction between holy and unholy **in time**
receive this blessing from God, and give back to God a portion of your time

5) preserve the created structure of the family and the orderly authority it embodies;

Let your families reflect the wisdom and instruction of God's Law

- 6) preserve the image of God in man--honor that image in one another
- 7) preserve the proper order of sexuality; be holy when you make love
- 8) preserve the goods of others; human ownership as exercise of dominion, imitation of God,
so do not defraud others, but respect what is theirs
- 9) preserve the reputations of others; just as God speaks to us, so also we are to speak to others--
to speak evil of others is not imitating Christ.
- 10) orderliness in the heart; desires lead to action

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(Ex 20:1-17)

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