

“THE FATHER’S RULES”

Exodus 19:1 - 20:21
Servants’ Guide

INTRODUCTION

“It’s tough being a child. At every turn there are new laws: the Law of Crossing the Street, the Law of Speaking and Interrupting. Then there is the complex maze of the Dinner Table Law. Childhood is marked by the hearing and internalizing of instruction. If we accept and follow these customs, we become capable, functioning adults.

The book of Exodus describes the childhood of Israel. A loving father delivers the law to his children; it is encapsulated in the Ten Commandments.”

-Taken from Lifeguide Bible Studies, IVP

“In 1980, the United States Supreme Court ruled by a 5-4 decision in Stone v. Graham that the schoolchildren of Kentucky have the constitutional right not to be assaulted by the presence of the Ten Commandments on their classroom walls. The Court’s majority revealed its rationale, in part, with remarkable secular frankness: If the posted copies of the Ten Commandments are to have any effect at all it will be to induce the schoolchildren to read, meditate upon, perhaps to venerate and obey, the Commandments. However desirable this might be as a matter of private devotion, it is not a permissible state objective under the Establishment Clause. In short, the passive display of the ten Commandments was not permitted because some students might obey them.”

So, in one imperious swoop America’s highest court declared that the Decalogue [Decalogue: deca=ten; logue=word; therefore, ten words] (a document of incalculable influence that has provided the basis for the public morality of western culture, a text which for the first two hundred years of our nation’s history was universally used to teach English) was an improper display for impressionable young minds. This is secularism with a vengeance! As the Wall Street Journal wryly observed regarding the court’s ruling: “A citizen might be forgiven for suspecting that there is as much long-term danger in this sort of dogma as there is in the Ten Commandments hanging on schoolroom walls.”

“And indeed there is. Western culture is without a moral compass. The terrible epitaph of the days of Israel’s Old Testament judges is being lived out: “Every man did what was right in his own eyes.” Today it is commonplace to call “evil good, and good evil” (cf. Judges 17:6 and Isaiah 5:20, NASB). Our culture is truly foundering – and may soon be beached on the desolate shores of its own moral emptiness.”

-Kent Hughes, Discipline of Grace

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Share about when your parents first gave you “freedom” in your growing up years.
2. What is important about the context of the commandments, as set by God in verse 2?
 - *God makes clear that it to himself that Israel owes its freedom. Necessary because human nature is prone to forget. Israel would easily forget God’s grace as we often do.*
 - *Here we see the prominence of grace in the Old Testament. Grace preceded giving of the law.*
 - *Important to note that this is the only event with this magnitude of manifestation of God’s presence. Unlike the rest of scripture which is written by human hands under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, these commandments are written by God’s own finger.*
 - *We can see the 10 Commandments as a summary of all the commands in the Bible.*
Note that there are three kinds of law in the O.T.
 - a. **Ceremonial laws:** *minute detailed laws of how to sacrifice and do ceremonies. Egs., “Pull the wool, cut it this way or that, different measurements of wheat, etc.” We don’t have to do these laws anymore today because Christ has fulfilled all of these ceremonies.*
 - b. **Civil laws:** *Because the Israelites were a nation, there were a lot of national laws for them to keep. There were specific laws for kings, judges, citizens, about marriage, etc. Some civil law is involved. We don’t have to keep this civil law either, because we are not Israelites, only spiritual Israelites.*
 - c. **Moral laws:** *This law we do have to keep today. These are laws that have to do with being a human being. Egs., “Don’t kick someone in a certain place; don’t murder; take care of the foreigner in your midst, etc.” These kinds of moral laws apply to us. **And a summary of all the moral laws in the Bible is the Ten Commandments.***

How about the New Testament? (Excerpt from Pastor Min Chung’s message on 10.2.98 – www.cfchome.org)

“Well, Jesus says he came to fulfill these moral laws. “Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished. (Matthew 5:17-18).” So Jesus fulfills the ceremonial laws and the civil laws, and helps us by the Holy Spirit to fulfill the moral laws. We will do this when we see Jesus face to face. Then he expands on this also.

Matthew 5:21-30: After he talks about murder, he says, "If you hate somebody, you have already committed murder." What could this mean? Is murder and hatred the same thing? Of course, the degree is different but it is the **same kind of sin**. It is from the same root cause. Murder is caused by hate. So murder includes all kinds of hatred - the cause of murder, gossip, not praying for them, being a stumbling block to them, not showing kindness, being jealous of them, etc. It includes all kinds of smaller duties that pertain to the same category of murdering and hating. See how comprehensive this is? So concerning adultery, when you commit lust in your heart, you have committed adultery also. Of course, degree is different, but it is the same kind because adultery starts from lust. So when God says in Ex. 20, not to commit adultery, he's talking about all the smaller things related to it also. For example, all the actions, thoughts, and words, you should convey only to your spouse, whether before or after marriage. You have to have absolute purity in this cosmos with everyone except one woman or man. So that one command concerns all the smaller commands related to it. Each command represents all the lesser duties and lesser sins. It is very comprehensive. If you write down all the commandments in the N.T. you can kind of generally fit them into the 10 commandments here.

So we must meditate on these commandments and reflect on them. Law in Scripture is the **revelation of God's holiness**. It is a call to be like him. We are to be holy like God - to be clean. How many parents would not want to wash their kids playing in the dirty mud? If a child is running to a fire, how many parents would not try everything they could to prevent them from going there? That's what God's doing. He's providing the best guidance through these commands. God gives his grace through His laws. When we become Christians, we want to do this. We don't do this in order to be saved, but because we are saved. Before Christ, we want to run away from these laws, but after Christ, we want to live according to these laws."

3. What is significant about the focus of the first four commands (vv.3-11)? What common thematic theme runs through them?
 - *God's holiness is the subject of each of these four commandments.*
 - *He is the only God; he is beyond idols and images; his very name is holy; we are to keep one day holy in his honor.*
 - *Jesus summarizes these four in Mt 22:37, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind".*
 - *There is a stress on God being unique and absolute.*

4. What logic do you find in the order of the final six commandments in verses 13-17?
 - *Respect for fellow humans is central to these final six commandments.*
 - *Restrains us from abusing people, their possessions, and setting ourselves up as gods.*
 - *When these commandments are not followed, the society experiences a moral decay.*
 - *"The fifth commandment, about honoring parents, is the transitional one. It is akin to honoring God (the first four), as well as honoring our neighbor (the final five). The sixth commandment is the first purely social one, and we find it to be the most serious on a descending scale: murder, adultery, stealing, lying and coveting. All sin is serious, of course, the degree is established in the effect upon others."* -Taken from "The Ten Commandments", IV Press

5. The Israelites fall back in fear from the manifestations of God's presence (vv.18-20). How can fear be a positive reaction to the laws of God? What are some lessons we can learn about fearing God?
 - *God's laws are not meant for prohibiting but for protecting his children.*
 - *Luther: "The law must be laid upon those that are to be justified, that they may be shut up in the prison thereof, until the righteousness of faith come—that, when they are cast down and humbled by the law, they should fly to Christ."*

6. What struck you today? Share about one of these commandments that presents a great challenge for you to live out?