

## Responding to Our LORD – “Thou Shalt”

07/18/2021

**Scripture:** (Exodus 19:3b-9a, 20:1-20 ESV)

The LORD called to him [Moses] out of the mountain, saying, "Thus you shall say to the house of Jacob, and tell the people of Israel:

'You yourselves have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself. Now therefore, if you will indeed obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession among all 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 people of Israel."

So Moses came and called the elders of the people and set before them all these words that the LORD had commanded him. All the people answered together and said, "All that the LORD has spoken we will do." And Moses reported the words of the people to the LORD. And the LORD said to Moses, "Behold, I am coming to you in a thick cloud, that the people may hear when I speak with you, and may also believe you forever."...

...And 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.

“You shall have no other gods before me.

“You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. You shall not bow down to them or serve them, for I the LORD your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and the fourth generation of those who hate me, but showing steadfast love to thousands of those who love me and keep my commandments.

“You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain, for the LORD will not hold him guiltless who takes his name in vain.

“Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor, and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work, you, or your son, or your daughter, your male servant, or your female servant, or your livestock, or the sojourner who is within your gates. For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.

“Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long in the land that the LORD your God is giving you.

“You shall not murder.

“You shall not commit adultery.

“You shall not steal.

“You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.

“You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or his male servant, or his female servant, or his ox, or his donkey, or anything that is your neighbor's.”

Now when all the people saw the thunder and the flashes of lightning and the sound of the trumpet and the mountain smoking, the people were afraid and trembled, and they stood far off and said to Moses, “You speak

to us, and we will listen; but do not let God speak to us, lest we die.” Moses said to the people, “Do not fear, for God has come to test you, that the fear of him may be before you, that you may not sin.”

**Scripture:** (Romans 2:1-8, {9-16} ESV)

Therefore you have no excuse, O man, every one of you who judges. For in passing judgment on another you condemn yourself, because you, the judge, practice the very same things. We know that the judgment of God rightly falls on those who practice such things. Do you suppose, O man-- you who judge those who practice such things and yet do them yourself-- that you will escape the judgment of God? Or do you presume on the riches of his kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance? But because of your hard and impenitent heart you are storing up wrath for yourself on the day of wrath when God's righteous judgment will be revealed.

He will render to each one according to his works: to those who by patience in well-doing seek for glory and honor and immortality, he will give eternal life; but for those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, there will be wrath and fury. *{There will be tribulation and distress for every human being who does evil, the Jew first and also the Greek, but glory and honor and peace for everyone who does good, the Jew first and also the Greek. For God shows no partiality. For all who have sinned without the law will also perish without the law, and all who have sinned under the law will be judged by the law. For it is not the hearers of the law who are righteous before God, but the doers of the law who will be justified. For when Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do what the law requires, they are a law to themselves, even though they do not have the law. They show that the work of the law is written on their hearts, while their conscience also bears witness, and their conflicting thoughts accuse or even excuse them on that day when, according to my gospel, God judges the secrets of men by Christ Jesus.}*

## Sermon:

This morning, we are continuing to talk about God's "moral law", the *Torah*. The "moral law" is also God's "covenant law": stipulations of the eternal covenant concerning what the LORD, what Jesus, has done on behalf of all His chosen people, and how we are to live our lives in grateful response to Him.

The Bible tells us that after God spoke the words of His covenant to the people of Israel, *{from the mountain in Exodus 19 and 20,}* all of Israel responded declaring, "All that the LORD has spoken we will do.". They answered Him not only for themselves, but also for all their descendants, particularly the God-man, Jesus Christ. They agreed to all of God's terms, but this was no mere "gentleman's agreement", this was a covenant. Then Moses went up the mountain to receive the two "tablets of the testimony" (Exodus 24:12; 31:18) upon which God had written His covenant, *{front and back}* (Ex 32:15-16); a permanent copy "carved in stone"; an agreement forever unalterable and without an expiration date. Eternal security for the people and perpetual obedience to the LORD.

Covenant. Now that is a word which I have used several times and I have not yet paused to define and explain just what a covenant is. I have not explained why it is such an important term, for it may in fact be the most important term used within Scripture, so I will offer a short explanation by a comparison.

Modern contracts and other legally-binding agreements are "like" covenants in that they consist of multiple parties who agree to do (or not do) one thing or another *{i.e. Bob Harvey agreed to paint the sanctuary and the church agreed to pay him and his team for their work}*. Historically, covenants were made binding upon the parties by their oath, swearing upon their respective deities to witness and hold them to account (Heb 6:13). Sadly today, we do not consider oaths to be sacrosanct like they once were, now they are merely "empty words" spoken for show with one hand on the Bible *{or Torah, or Quran}*, without any fear of consequence or retribution for lying *{3<sup>rd</sup> Commandment violation}*. However, unlike our more modern contracts, covenants offered no provision to "get out" of the contract. They also had the most severe penalty for a violation or "breach of contract", a fatal penalty. For example: Joshua and the Israelites made a covenant of peace and protection with the Gibeonites during the conquest of Canaan *{under the Gibeonites' false pretenses}* (Joshua 9), then King David later had to atone for King Saul's attempt to exterminate them, in violation of that earlier covenant, by handing over seven of Saul's sons to be killed under covenantal justice (2 Samuel 21:1-6). *{Note: It was also politically advantageous for David, to have potential rival claimants of the throne killed for "justice" sake.}*

*Berit* is the Hebrew word for covenant and the expression used for making a covenant is *karat berit*, the literal meaning is to "cut a covenant". There are several different thoughts as to just what this idiom means, whether it was "symbolic", or merely referring to the inscribing of the terms into stone, but from the study of other recovered ancient Near East covenant treaties, along with the covenant God made with Abraham in Genesis 15, we find that "cutting a covenant" was as gruesomely literal as it sounds *{although I'm sure that many covenant signatories would have hoped for and preferred symbolism}*. *{Circumcision, as the "sign" of the old covenant, involves a ritual of cutting and the shedding of blood.}*

When a covenant was made an animal would be sacrificed and divided into two parts. Then the parties would pass between the pieces, swearing upon divine oath their agreement to the terms of the covenant, and by the symbolic act of walking between the pieces, swear to the penalty of: "Let it be done to me, as to this sacrifice, if I break this covenant"; a penalty of death and dismemberment as the consequence for breaking covenant. After the oaths, the parties would share a meal together, eating the sacrifice, as a final symbol of their union and affirmation. Later, upon the death of either party, the covenant was not declared "null and void", but instead the

surviving party and the heir would meet and renew the covenant terms. Ultimately, the terms of the covenant became “the law” which governed and guided all future relations between these parties.

We see this process of “cutting a covenant” over and over again throughout Scripture: the “firepot” theophany of the LORD, passing between the pieces of Abraham's sacrifice in Genesis 15; the circumcision of male children (Genesis 17:14); the sprinkling of the blood upon the Israelites, by Moses in Exodus 24, as ratification of their verbal oath from Exodus 19; the renewal of the Sinai covenant by Israel, prior to Moses' death (Deuteronomy 29), and renewed again with Joshua before his death, (Joshua 24); most importantly we see this covenantal system during the institution of the Lord's Supper *{which may be viewed as a renewal of the covenant of grace made with Abraham in Genesis 15 and as the ratification of the covenant of redemption made between God the Father and God the Son before the foundation of the world (Ephesians 1:3-14)}*, when Jesus said while taking the bread, “*This is my body which is given for you...*” and “*This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood.*” (Luke 22:19-20); a sacrificial death, a division, and a meal together to ratify the covenant. Thus, during our celebration of the Lord's Supper, when we eat the bread and drink the cup, we are united by the unbreakable, bond of covenant to Christ and His death, physically and spiritually. By remembering this we know and believe that we are truly united to Him and with Him, both physically and spiritually, in His resurrection as our hope of the resurrection life to come.

Now, why was God's covenant Law written for us on two tablets? Were the terms so lengthy and involved that they would not fit on just one, or was there some greater import? The whole covenant itself almost seems like it is all “fine print”; one would think that God would make it fit. Do we brag about how many pages we use when writing a contract? No. *{Not usually anyways. Sometimes we might, but not to the degree which Scripture refers to these “two tablets”. Scripture refers to the tablets being carved and given as a pair fifteen times. (Exod. 31:18, 32:15, 34:1, 4, 29; Deut. 4:13, 5:22, 9:10, 11, 15, 17, 10:1, 3; 1 Ki. 8:9; 2 Chr. 5:10)}*

We commonly refer to the two tablets of the Law as having one contain the first four commandments, and the other tablet containing commandments numbered five through ten. That is how they are traditionally presented and displayed. That is how Cecil B DeMille presented them in that famous movie with Charlton Heston. That is how you will see them depicted in the synagogue today; but that is not likely how they were actually written out, if anything they may have been both written with the first four on one side, and the last six on the other.

History has shown, through the many documents and monuments recovered from the region and period, that the “Ten Commandments” as presented in Exodus 20 *{and Deuteronomy 5}* follows the linguistic and legal format of a suzerainty covenant treaty: a treaty given by an overlord ruler to a vassal (or servant) state which owes him their allegiance (by right of conquest or petition). This format describes who the suzerain is and what he has done for the vassal to establish this relationship, and then it outlines the duties and obligations of the vassal. Once the covenant was ratified, it would then be “set in stone”, carved *{carved so as to be unalterable}* on two tablets, one for each party to keep in their possession. These covenants were now considered in-alterable, non-amendable, and sacrosanct.

If the covenant were broken by either party, then the aggrieved party would break their tablet and the pieces would stand as a testimony against the covenant-breaker. But graciously, after Moses broke the first set of tablets (Ex 32:19) because of the Israelite's violation against God's covenant by building and worshiping the Golden Calf, the LORD inscribed a second copy (Exodus 32), which Moses was then commanded to place in the Ark of the Covenant (Deut 10:2) because God remains faithful to His covenant, even when we are not.

Why was God's covenant law inscribed on two tablets? Like covenants between men and nations, both parties to the covenant needed a copy: one set for the LORD to be kept inside the “Ark of the Covenant”, stored within

the Holy of Holies of the tabernacle, and one set for the people of Israel to be kept in their midst *{as during the wanderings in the wilderness, the tabernacle was moved and kept in the center of the community while they traveled and camped}*, and their copy was also stored within the Ark.

The Ark of the Covenant was the most protected and highly valued object to all the people of Israel, because it stored the “tablets of the testimony” and other items demonstrating God’s faithfulness *{Aaron’s staff which had budded and an urn containing manna (Hebrews 9:4)}*. The LORD was said to be “enthroned on the cherubim” (1 Samuel 4:4; Ezekiel 10). The cover of the Ark was called “*the mercy seat*” (Exodus 25:17) and was where the blood, from the yearly sacrifices of atonement (Leviticus 16:14-16), was to be put as an atonement for the Holy Place, because of the sinfulness of the people. The Ark became God’s mobile throne on the earth and within it was the declaration of the people’s only right and reason to come and worship the LORD. The “*tablets of the testimony*” contained God’s Holy Law and His covenant with the people whom He had claimed for His own. When the Philistines captured the Ark, during the days of Samuel, the people of Israel cried “*The glory has departed from Israel!*” (1 Sam. 4:21 ESV). Then, when the Philistines placed the Ark within their temple, they found their idols fallen prostrate before it; the Philistines suffered tumors and death until they returned the Ark to Israel, because not only was it the symbol of Israel’s identity but it contained the source of their identity as the “people of God”: the two tablets, the Ten Commandments, the LORD’s Holy Law and covenant.

So, not only does the Ten Commandments tell us what we are to do and to not do, it also tells us who we are: God’s chosen people. Considering that then, our whole understanding of the Ten Commandments takes on a different tenor. Our idea for its importance in our lives, and the weight of power behind it becomes much stronger.

The tablets were not written as just a list of ten things for us to do, or not to do. These are not the “Ten Suggestions”. Exodus 20 begins with, “*And God spake all these words, saying,*” (Exod. 20:1 ESV). The Ten Commandments *{are not Ten Mitzvot: they}* are not really commandments, they are the ten *davarim*; ten “WORDS”, ten statements of absolute fact; ten declarations carrying all of the weight and authority of the One who made these proclamations behind them.

They are not simply “Do this...” and “Don’t do that..”. They are more like a parent saying to their child, “Don’t touch the stove, because it’s hot!” or “Put on your jacket, it’s cold outside!”, but even stronger. They are imperatives *{imperative in application and importance, not grammatical imperatives}*. They are declarations which must be obeyed immediately, and obeyed to the fullest, clearest effect. They are “Divine Imperatives”. They are imperatives like a father telling a son, “You WILL be home by 9 o’clock!” or a mother saying, “You WILL clean your room, now!”, or “You WILL eat your dinner.” *{I don’t remember that often being a problem for me.}* Those kind of imperatives which make a person believe their name has been changed to “WILL”, because of the emphatic force.

“Thou shalt...” and “Thou shalt not...”

Imperatives leave no room for argument, discussion, or dissent. There is no room for disobedience. These imperative declarations put the “fear of God” into a person, for good reason.

*“Now when all the people saw the thunder and the flashes of lightning and the sound of the trumpet and the mountain smoking, the people were afraid and trembled, and they stood far off and said to Moses, “You speak to us, and we will listen; but do not let God speak to us, lest we die.””* (Exod. 20:18-19 ESV)

If you hear the divine command straight from the Source, with Whom you cannot argue, then one has no choice but to obey; you have no excuse.

These are rules which we must obey. We must obey them because they are the standard against which we will be and are judged. We must also obey them because they are the standard which we will use to judge the world, under Christ's authority (Romans 2:1-3; Cor 6:1-4). All people will be judged, even those who do not accept God's Law, as well as those who actively deny it, like our culture does daily for even our modern, civil law holds to this same legal application with the maxim of "*Ignorantia juris non excusat*", meaning "Ignorance of the law is no excuse" (Leviticus 5:17; Romans 2:12). Although as professing and believing Christians we are "*under grace*" (Romans 6:14), the grace we have received, the forgiveness for all our lawlessness and lawbreaking that we have been given, is not license to continue in our sins, but has been given to restore us out from under the burden of our sins and guilt, to repentance, and to holiness in Christ. Being forgiven must lead to our obedience.

Our union with Christ, as His Bride, is such a beautiful thing. He has now made us spotless (Isaiah 1:18) and without blemish (Revelation 19:7), clothed in the purest white garments. If we believe that, if you truly believe you are united with Christ, and if you honestly acknowledge and confess the depths of your prior wretched, filthy, sinful condition and state of being; then how could you or anyone, how could any believing Christian want to soil themselves with sin again? We are charged to be what Christ has declared us to be: clean, holy, pure, and obedient. That is not to say we will not still get messed up: accidents happen and unfortunately we do still sin against God, despite our redeemed heart's desire not to. We still sin and get that spots of scarlet on us, like spaghetti splatters from red sauce on a clean white shirt or blouse *{you can't take me out anywhere}*, and Jesus keeps cleaning us up. But continuing in sin is not the intent or goal.

However, we must also avoid an extreme swing to the opposite direction, away from the anti-nomianism I mentioned last week. We must also avoid legalism and not make our obedience to the law a requirement for salvation, or the source of our confidence. The Law guides us and guards us, defining the lanes of obedience to Christ, while Grace is like those rounded "gutter-bumpers" which keep us inside of those lanes; but even though we can sometimes get "lucky" and bowl a "turkey" *{three strikes in a row}* or two, only Jesus Christ bowls a perfect 300-game, every time, always.

As sinners, redeemed by grace, we want to follow the Law. Now we want to obey. Now we want to stay under the Speed Limit, but sometimes the "lead foot" of our sinful nature causes us to slip and fail, and drive much faster than 55 mph, until we crash through the guardrails. Now we see the value of the Law. Now we understand why the LORD God has given it to us: for our benefit, our well-being, and our good. He alone knows what is truly best for us, because He is the One who made us and all of the creation in which we live.

Remember, the LORD did not give the Law to Israel before He brought them out of Egypt, He gave it to them afterwards. The LORD's work of salvation has never been conditional based upon our obedience, that is the flaw which "Legalism" promotes.

"Legalism" is:

- Believing and acting as if "I must do XYZ so that then, God will love me."
- Thinking we must be "perfect people" before we can be accepted into the church, that we have to have it "all together" before we can come to Jesus.

But Jesus came for the broken, damaged, and absolutely "not perfect" people, calling them to faith and repentance; saying, "*For I came not to call the righteous, but sinners.*" (Matt. 9:13 ESV). Jesus calls to us as we are. He calls to us when we are in our deepest and our dirtiest mess, and He does not leave us there. First, He calls us out from there, then He changes us, then He fixes us, so that by His grace we may keep clean. Then

we respond to His grace by walking away from what we **were (sinners)**, to live instead as who He says we **are (saints)**.

His Law teaches us how to live good lives and the Law does not restrict us from what is good, it guides us towards the good. The Law no longer holds a coercive power over our lives, yet the Law still instructs our lives. The Law cannot grant us salvation by our obedience, all it can do is condemn us; but now we can and should still obey the Law in love, because we have been saved. It is a “done deal” and you didn't have to do anything to earn it, because Jesus did all the work necessary.

### **Isn't that great and Good News?**

God did not tell the Israelites that IF they kept these ten rules, THEN He would bring them out of bondage in Egypt. No, first God brought the Israelites to Mount Sinai from Egypt, and then He said, *“I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. You shall have no other gods before me....”*

Just as God saved Israel from Egypt, so too God has redeemed His Elect from our bondage to sin and death. Now we are allowed and able to obey Him. Now we can obey, not out fear of retribution or punishment for our failure, but instead from love and in gratitude for what God has done for us, just as He always intended. Just as Adam was meant to obey the LORD, by living and working in the Garden, our faithful obedience is worship, because it glorifies the LORD.

So, how what do the Ten Commandments tell us about our lives? How are we to live according to God' Law?

Firstly, before the Law even tells us what we are and are not to do, it tells us “Who God is”, “who we were”, and “who we now are”. RC Sproul used to often say that our greatest problem as people {and as the church} is that we do not know “Who God is” and “who we are”. Fortunately, the Ten Commandments begin by answering those two questions.

*“I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.”*

The LORD is our Redeemer and Savior. He is our Rescuer, our Chain-breaker. He is greater than the greatest worldly power; He is certainly greater than we are, otherwise we would not need Him.

We were slaves to a master more powerful than ourselves. We were slaves to our sin. We needed to be rescued. We needed and need a Savior. We needed to be purposefully, intentionally, and powerfully removed from the place of bondage to a place of freedom. Now we are God's chosen people, His elect. Now we are free from our sin, free from our past. We are now not who we once were.

It is no wonder that our culture has forgotten about who God is, and who we are, since it has removed all mention of His Law from the public sphere. It is the foundation of all morality. The knowledge of who God is, and who we are in relation to Him, should govern all of our relationships; it is written on all of our hearts, but our sinful nature causes us to ignore it and suffer condemnation. The Law defines what is right and what is wrong, because God is the only judge and arbiter of what is right.

*“You shall have no other gods before me.”*

Having “no other gods before” God, does not create a ranking system; the LORD is not “first among many”. The word “before” here is not “first, before the second, before the third”, it is before as in “standing right there before me”. We must have no other “gods” in the LORD's presence, for the whole earth is the His (19:5), and as there are no other “gods” to rival Him in power, might and majesty, and no other “gods” have rescued us or redeemed us, then we must worship Him alone. We must remove them and keep them from our hearts and minds.

*“You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth.”*

We are not to worship anything created in place of our Holy LORD. We may have no other objects of devotion to worship in His place. He did not create other “gods”, but man has elevated different “creatures” and generated other idols from our imagination, as rival gods. Whether we worship idols of stone, or wood, or golden, “images” of things real and imagined, or abstract ideas; those things cannot hear us or answer us; those idols have not saved us, nor will they.

Now, this commandment against images may seem strange to us today because we are “so much more sophisticated” than those ancient peoples. Of course “everyone knows” that statues are not really “gods” or deserving of our worship; but, our idols today simply take on different forms and likenesses. Our idols are found in politics: whether in Party {*Republi-can'ts and Demon-rats*} or individual politicians; in sports: professional, college, and kids; in our entertainment: TV shows, or movies, and online streaming, or the actors themselves; in our possessions and other collections of STUPH {*I'm not saying that politics, sports, entertainment, and such are inherently sinful or that they are equally idolatrous for every person, it is a matter of degree and emphasis by our own grading of their importance to life; ask yourself, Do I put ABC/XYZ above or before God in my life? Do I think that I do not have time for God, or do I choose to not make time for God? Do I skip church on Sunday to watch the football game? Do I watch an extra hour of Fox News instead of reading my Bible plan or doing my daily devotional? Do I listen to a friend talking about their struggles, their feelings of emptiness in life and offer them cold support, suggesting programs or activities for them to find fulfillment in instead of sharing my relationship with Jesus. It is all a matter of degree, the opportunities are there.*}

Everywhere we look in the world around us, we find things that either are or may become our idol,s because our sinful hearts and minds want to worship anything **but** the Holy Sovereign Creator LORD, for He requires far more of us than our sinful flesh can bear.

John Calvin said, “...the human mind is...a perpetual forge of idols.”<sup>1</sup> Idol worship is something we are all guilty of, something we often do without even realizing.

We all love to talk about the things we love; so we love to talk about our many idols. That is another reason why the *Shema*, the great commandment, is so important and recited by the Jews thrice daily; to remind them and refocus them towards the only true God. It immediately follows the giving of the Ten Commandments in Deuteronomy (chapter 5) and continues with, “*And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise.”* (Deuteronomy 6:6-7 ESV) God and His Word, His Law is to surround us and to always be on our minds. It is to be in our every conversation, with every person, in every place we go. We are not to let anything else to take His place in our hearts and minds. As Christians indwelt by the Holy Spirit, the LORD is seated upon the throne of our hearts; so, we must constantly strive to keep our sinful selves and our sinful desires from crawling up there, to try and take His place.

Every one of us is a “theologian” {*a compound words of the Greek: theos, meaning god; and logia or logos, meaning word*}. We are told to {Love the LORD, with all our heart, and soul, and mind} therefore, He should be foremost in our mind at all times, and being the One Person who should be the most important to us, we should always desire to talk about Him, His Word, and His works; but the question becomes, what god do we most often talk about? The LORD or our idols? What idols do you {*and I*} need to repent of?

*“You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain...”*

This is not a generic prohibition on cursing or foul language as commonly assumed. This is a positive command to keep the LORD's name Holy, because He is Holy. We do not do this by forgetting it {*as the Jews did by*

1 John Calvin, The Institutes of the Christian Religion; book 1, chapter 11, section 8



*intent*}, or by replacing it with a substitute or representative “stand-in” word {*as the Jews do in referring to God as HaShem, meaning “the Name”, or Adonai meaning “Lord”, or as we commonly use LORD (with the small capitals), or Jehovah and Yahweh (which are not likely, properly correct, but Yahweh is likely closest)*}. This commandment is not about His Name itself, but about Who and What the Name represents. This declaration is regarding oaths especially; for whatever is sworn by the LORD or His Name, He will surely hold to account. Whatever is done in His Name, must be done for His glory, alone; so if so sworn, it must be done. It must not be anything sinful, wrong, and evil, because His Name is to be kept Holy.

The English word “vain”, used here, carries the older understanding of the word as: empty, valueless, insubstantial, and fruitless; God's name is anything but insubstantial or valueless, His name as told to Moses, “*ohyeh veohyeh*” or “I AM who I AM”; it is the declaration of His eternal being.

Speaking of the people of Israel, the prophet Hosea said, “*They utter mere words; with empty oaths they make covenants; so judgment springs up like poisonous weeds in the furrows of the field.*” (Hosea 10:4 ESV), because judgment and wrath is the result of taking the LORD's Name in vain. He will be vindicated.

James says, “*But above all, my brothers, do not swear, either by heaven or by earth or by any other oath, but let your “yes” be yes and your “no” be no, so that you may not fall under condemnation.*” (James 5:12 ESV) An oath never should be needed, especially among Christians. A person's word should be their bond, it should be good enough; but because we do not trust one another, people swear things on oath. So oaths, things sworn by the LORD, who alone is faithful and true, must not be proven false and should never be made flippantly.

“*Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.*”

Every day, every moment of our lives belongs to the LORD and should be devoted to Him, His worship, and His glory (1 Corinthians 10:31); but especially one {*particular*} day in seven is to be devoted to Him alone, the rest of the week is given to handle all our needs and wants, but the Sabbath is given for God's desire alone. God desires Good for us, thus He provided an example and modeled it for us by resting on the seventh day; not because God gets tired, but because we do. Physical rest is good for us, it is needful; but especially on the Sabbath, our resting is meant to be with the LORD because “*In Him we live and move and have our being.*” (Acts 17:28). This is our time together to fellowship with God, and grow in our relationship with Christ. **We will speak more about this in greater depth, later.**

“*Honor your father and your mother...*”

The “honor” to be given is not limited to our earthly parents, but also applies to our heavenly Father. This honor applies to our parents and to all other persons who hold authority over us, because they have been appointed to that role for our good {*in some form and fashion, although we may not always see, understand or appreciate that good*} by the LORD (Romans 13:1-5). We honor them by giving respect, heeding their words, and obeying their commands promptly {*as I have too often failed to do for my mother especially*}, without complaint {*again, I am guilty of this. I am preaching to myself here as well*}, and responding as if their command came directly from the LORD.

“*You shall not murder.*” {*The Hebrew word and inflection used is “murder” and not the generic word for “kill” because sometimes killing is “needful”: the sword in the hand of the State for capital punishment (Romans 13:4); the defense of others; the LORD's justice and retribution (however it is not to us (the Church, Christians) to determine who is deserving of this application, as was in the days of Joshua; etc.)*}

This command prohibits all intentional and willful violence against anyone made in the Image of God. Murder and violence {*in all its forms*} elevates oneself and your assumed good, over the good, benefit, and well-being of your neighbor. It also “assumes” the power and authority of God, by the taking of a human life without being able to create or restore life. However, this commandment does not prohibit “necessary” violence performed on behalf of, or in defense of, those unable to protect themselves {*whether as an agent of the State (military or*

*police) or as an ordinary individual*}, for that is still a godly service to one's neighbor. Violence must never be the first or principal recourse, but always the last.

*“You shall not commit adultery.”*

Adultery is more than just the violation of the marriage covenant. Adultery is the faithlessness demonstrated when transgressing any covenant. This expression was particularly applied against the people of Israel for their faithlessness to the LORD by their *“going after other gods”* (Deuteronomy 6:14, 8:19, 11:28, 13:2, 28:14; Judges 2:12, 17, 19; 1 Kings 11:4, 10; Jeremiah 7:6, 9, 11:10, 13:10, 16:11, 25:6, 35:15). {*Example: The entirety of the book of Hosea discusses Israel's covenantal adultery with the idols of Ba'al and Asherah and the LORD's faithfulness, even still.*} Adultery is faithlessness.

*“You shall not steal.”*

Like the prohibition against murder, this is violence against the Image of God, and violence against God, whom they represent. Theft of property from others raises our own self-valuation, and elevates ourselves to an assumed position of “lordship”, trying to topple God from His throne in our sinful rebellion.

*“You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.”*

Truth. Jesus said, *“I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”* (Jn. 14:6 ESV). Truth is important in all aspects of our lives. We believe and accept all of God's Word as being the Truth. We believe that Jesus is God's *“Word made flesh”* (John 1) and that Christ lives inside of us. So lying: speaking and spreading of falsehoods; is naturally dishonoring to the LORD and the Spirit of Christ within us. “[*Bearing*] *false witness*” is blatant, disrespectful sin against both man and God; so, our lies offer testimony and evidence against us, declaring that the truth, that Christ, is not in us (1 John 1:8, 10; 2 John 1:2).

*“You shall not covet...[anything].”*

To covet is to indulge in an “inordinate, ungoverned, selfish desire”<sup>2</sup>. Selfish desires elevate yourself over and against your neighbor's needs, wants, or property rights. Mind you, it is not sinful to desire or to want something new, but this sin grows when you desire and want someone else's “something”. You might want a new car, a new dress, or a new set of golf clubs, then go and buy whatever you want; that is not sin. Coveting is: wanting Bill Wyatt's golf clubs, Bob Harvey's work van, or Ms Dana's outfit; not wanting one like theirs, but wanting their particular possessions.

Responding to the Pharisee's question, Jesus summarized the whole law with, {Thou shalt *“...love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.”* (Matt. 22:37 ESV) and thou shalt *“...love your neighbor as yourself.”* (Matt. 22:39 ESV).}

After the LORD had spoken these words to Moses and the Israelites, they trembled in fear. They demanded that Moses speak to God for them, that He would mediate and intercede for them, because they knew and understood what was being demanded of them, total obedience, and it terrified them. Surrendering our autonomy to another Person, being obedient to someone over whom we have no control, is terrifying.

They wanted an excuse to conveniently “not understand”. They wanted someone else to blame for their failure to obey, and someone else to suffer God's wrath for their sin. They wanted a “scapegoat” (Leviticus 16:7-10) and so the LORD gave us One, Jesus.

Moses told them, *“Do not fear, for God has come to test you, that the fear of him may be before you, that you may not sin.”* The LORD gave us the Law because He wants us to be holy, as He is holy (Leviticus 11:44). He does not want us to sin, so He defined what sin is and then provided us with the choice; but because of our

---

2 BDB p.326 - Hebrew *chemod* (*chet mem dalet*)

fallen nature, we could only choose to sin. We need the “offspring of the woman”, we need someone to make the correct choice for us. Choose to: obey God's law and live free; or disobey His law and face destruction. The promise and the punishment, both fulfilled in Christ Jesus.

Our flawed works, of holy and reverent obedience, matter to the LORD. He knows that we cannot measure up on our own, which is why He gave us His Son, Jesus, to be obedient, for us. Although Jesus did it perfectly, for you and me, that still does not remove our obligation for obedience.

The Apostle Paul writes, “*He will render to each one according to his works: to those who by patience in well-doing seek for glory and honor and immortality, he will give eternal life; but for those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, there will be wrath and fury.*” The “Why” of what we do matters, not our perfect fulfillment or ability. We are to be imitators of Christ (1 Corinthians 11:1), we are not Christ Himself. We must patiently seek that glory, honor and immortality.

So, thou shalt “do well”, living and working for God's glory.

Thou shalt be “righteous”, by faith in Christ alone.

Thou shalt not be self-serving and disobedient to what and Who is true.

Thou shalt not live as the unrighteous because “*the LORD your God....brought you out of the house of slavery.*” for “*...you were bought with a price.*”.

Glorify the LORD by being obedient children. You are His most treasured possession.

**AMEN**