

God's Law

Exodus 20:13-26

Do you like board games?

I like board games and I suspect that most of us have played a few more board games than normal as we have navigated our way through this pandemic situation.

There is a huge selection of board games to choose from.

Classics like Monopoly, The Game of Life, Snakes and Ladders, Battleship, Chess, Checkers, etc.

More recently I've been introduced to games like Ticket to Ride, Othello ("A minute to learn a lifetime to master."), Settlers of Catan (I've only played the Junior version), Code Breakers, and many more.

Anyone who knows me fairly well knows that my favourite game of all time is a game called "Truth and Triumph."

Truth and Triumph is very similar in format to Trivial Pursuit, but it is made up of Bible and church history trivia questions.

You move your piece around the board by rolling dice. When you land on a spot you are asked a question according to the colour of the space you land on. If you answer the question correctly you get a small plastic disc to put on a card that shows how many categories you have answered correctly.

When your card is full you can move your piece to the end of the board and answer one final question to win the game.

I am always amazed that no matter how many times I play the game, I always learn something new or I am reminded of something that I've forgotten.

I know some people probably think the reason I like the game is because I win all the time, but I don't win all of the time.

I can also tell you that when I lose those that win usually take particular delight in beating the pastor at a Bible Trivia game.

No matter what board game you enjoy, they all have something in common.

They all have rules!

Some people are real sticklers for the rules and others are a bit relaxed but regardless of how many rules you decide to follow to have to follow at least some otherwise the game will make no sense and becomes pointless to play.

For that reason, I think it is safe to say that all of us understand the importance rules.

They are important for more than just board games, they are essential for life.

[Of course there are no rules or laws that are as important as God's laws. As we continue our journey through the book of Exodus we are looking at the final five of the Ten

Commandments/Ten Words of the LORD and the response of the people to hearing God's laws. Turn with me in your bibles to **Exodus 20:13-26**. There are three clear lessons for us from these verses. Number one...]

Point #1 – God's laws are for the good of all people.

If all people were to live according to the rules God gives, the world would be a much better place.

Two things are very important for us to keep in mind as we reflect on commandments six through ten.

One, each of these commands contains a theological component.

While on the surface they appear to be mostly about how we relate to other people, the reasons for the commands are grounded in God's creative action and His sovereign rule over the universe.

A second thing to consider is that for everything that is forbidden here there is a corresponding positive action that completes the true fulfillment of the command.

Let's quickly look through them together to see this.

#6 (v. 13) – You shall not murder.

-It is clear in the Bible that this does not forbid every act of killing (self-defense, warfare, capital punishment etc)

-What is in view here is participating in the unjust taking of someone's life.

-Genesis 9:6 tells us that this command is given because human beings bear God's image and to harm someone in this way is an attack of God.

-But the Bible is more than just "don't kill people" it also commands us to care for people.

#7 (v.14) – You shall not commit adultery.

-Question. Who created marriage? God did when He brought Adam and Eve together and according to Ephesians 5 marriage is intended to be a glorious reflection of Christ's love for the church; therefore, to disregard the marriage covenant is to show contempt for God's love.

-We need to do more than just not commit adultery, if married we need to be lovingly devoted to our husband or wife.

#8 (v.15) – You shall not steal.

-Walter Kaiser points out that this command is given because God is the One Who owns everything and by honouring the property of others we are honouring His sovereign right to give to people what He desires according to His will.

-More than not just taking other people's stuff the scriptures call us to be people of generosity.

#9 (v.16) – **You shall not give false testimony.**

- A number of commentators point out that while the language here indicates formal legal proceeding that it has much broader applications for all of life. In other words don't lie.
- Instead of lying we should tell the truth and be honest with one another. Why? Because God is a God of truth (Numbers 23:19).

#10 (v.17) – **You shall not covet.**

- Don't spend your time wishing you had what other people have.
- Instead be content and thankful for all the things God has graciously given to you. Even more than that, satisfy your soul in God rather than temporary things.

You see the commandments that God gives are a result of His nature.

The things that He tells us not to do and the things He tells us to do are based upon Who He Is.

[Now imagine for a moment that every human being upon the earth diligently kept these commands. Would things be better, worse, or the same? It seems pretty obvious things would be much better. Imagine a world where no one took the life of another person, but instead people took care of each other. Imagine a world where husbands and wives only had eyes for each other. Imagine a world where you didn't have to lock your doors. Imagine a world where you could trust everything everyone told you (the internet would look a little different). Imagine a world where people's hearts are full of satisfaction instead of envy. Would you agree that would be pretty amazing?]

If everyone did all of those who would benefit?

Everyone!

I often hear unbelievers lament about how bad the world is and about how if God were good He wouldn't allow all this evil in the world.

Many of those same people despise the thought of teaching God's commands to children.

I would suggest to you that much of the tragedy in the world would be avoided if people simply obeyed God's instructions.

[God's laws are for the good of all people. There is more for us to see in this text though. You see when God gives His laws a very obvious problem is revealed. None of us keep His laws. It would be easy to turn messages on the Ten Commandments into a way to make ourselves right with God, but if we look at the reaction of the people here we quickly discover that will not work. Here are the people of Israel at the mountain seeing all the fire and smoke and hearing the voice of God and when God finishes speaking they realize they need something. Their reaction shows us a second important lesson about God's law...]

#2 – God’s law shows our need of a mediator.

When our minds can begin to scratch the surface of God’s holy standards in light of the glory of His being we know we cannot stand alone before Him.

Look with me at verse 18 and listen to the experience of people who are actually hearing God speak to them.

The word translated ‘fear’ near the end of verse 18 means to quiver or tremble with fear. When they see the mountain ablaze and hear the LORD’s voice thunder from within the cloud they are scared.

Immediately they are aware that they cannot possibly be in God’s presence, so they say this in **Verses 19.**

Having heard God’s law from God’s own mouth every person among them with an ounce of genuine self-reflection knows he doesn’t measure up and so they know things must not continue like this.

“You speak to us, rather than God.”

That doesn’t mean they don’t want to know what God has to say.

It means they want Moses to talk to God and then tell them what He has to say.

What they are asking for is a go between, someone to stand in between themselves and the LORD acting as their representative.

That is what a mediator is.

[Most of us understand this concept when we think of a court of law. Most people who end up as a defendant in a court room don’t defend themselves. Who do they hire? That’s right a lawyer. Why? Because a lawyer knows the rules and language of a court room and is there to use his/her skill and ability to plead on behalf of the defendant. The lawyer can translate the legalese of the judge and prosecutor for the defendant.]

That is what the people are asking Moses to do.

To act as their representative before God.

We need that too! When we look at God’s law, when we can rightly comprehend the greatness of Who the LORD is we realize we cannot stand before a holy God on our own.

Praise the Lord we have a mediator far greater than Moses.

We have the perfect Son of God, Jesus Christ Who lives and pleads before the throne of God for all who trust and follow Him.

Don’t miss what Moses says here in **verse 20.**

God has not come to destroy the people but He has appeared to them with an awesome display of His glory so that they would “fear” Him.

That word for “fear” is different from the one in verse 18.

Instead of a trembling and terror type of fear this word conveys the idea of reverence and awe.

You see coming to God on your own you are left with only trembling because as a law breaker you have no hope before a holy God.

Further the trembling type of fear will never produce genuine and fruitful obedience to God's law because in this life people rarely have a sense of God's presence.

Moses encourages them towards something far better, he tells them that it is being awestruck by the greatness of God that will produce the fruitful obedience.

It is the same for us! With Christ as our mediator instead of God's glory being terrorizing we can be joyfully awestruck by the Lord and thereby be motivated towards joyful obedience.

[It is plain to see here that God's laws are for our good, but they also make clear our need of a mediator. One more thing is made clear to us in the last few verses of chapter 20. For the Christian it is very closely related to our need of a mediator. God speaks to Moses here and reveals to us that...]

Point #3 – God's law shows our need of redemption.

Obedience to the commandments of the LORD are good but it is of no value if our previous violations are not made right.

Moses does as the people ask in verse 21 and the LORD speaks to him in verses 22-26.

They very first thing that God wants Moses to remind the Israelites of is that they have personally witnessed the LORD speaking to them.

What has He been saying to them? He has been giving them His law.

It is clear here that God intends His law to serve as the highest law in the hearts and minds of His people because He again forbids them to "make any gods" alongside Him.

God is to have no equal among His people, because He has no equal period.

After He tells Moses to remind them of this, He then gives instructions regarding the making of an altar.

What is an altar used for?

We see it here in verse 24. Upon an altar people offer sacrifices.

The LORD speaks here of 'burnt offerings' and 'fellowship offerings'.

Offerings of sheep, goats, and cattle.

In Leviticus the people are given some greater details on burnt offerings and fellowship offerings.

In the fellowship offering the one making the offering is supposed lay his hand on the head of the animal and after the animal is killed its blood is sprinkled against the altar, it likely symbolizes the sin of the person being transferred to the animal.

Burnt offerings are a part of a number of offerings prescribed in the Law of Moses including the sin offering and the guilt offering.

Why is the making of an altar for sacrifice one of the very first things God tells Moses to tell the people after giving them the Ten Commandments?

Because they have all broken God's Law, they will break it again in the future and if people are to be in a relationship with God there violation of God's Law needs to be dealt with.

God's people need redemption.

[Do you ever have things break around the house? That happens at our house from time to time. When something breaks it is obvious to people because it is not working like it is supposed to. When that happens we are left with a choice. We can put it on a shelf and ignore it, we can throw it away, or we can fix it. One thing is for sure it will never function the way it is supposed to unless we fix it.]

The Lord knows His people are broken by sin.

We've all broken His law.

I defy anyone to think seriously about the Ten Commandments and then try and say that you are a good person worthy of a Holy God.

We have all messed up many times, but we there is still good reason to have hope brothers and sisters.

You see in addition to Jesus being a far better mediator than Moses, He has made a far better sacrifice for us than that of sheep, goats, or cattle.

He has offered Himself as a perfect sacrifice once and for all according to the book of Hebrews.

So when Jesus stands before the throne of God the Father, He has the best argument that can ever be made on our behalf, His own infinite worth.

No longer is God's Law a matter of condemnation for the Christian, but it is something that we can enjoy as those redeemed by the blood of Christ.

It is always for our good to keep God's law.

It always gives us a reason to praise God for giving us a mediator and it is a reason to rejoice in our redemption.