

Exodus 20:1-17 - EHV

Then God spoke all these words: ²I am the LORD your God, who brought you out from the land of Egypt, where you were slaves.

³You shall have no other gods beside me. ⁴You shall not make any carved image for yourself or a likeness of anything in heaven above, or on the earth below, or in the waters under the earth. ⁵Do not bow down to them or be subservient to them, for I the LORD your God am a jealous God. I follow up on the guilt of the fathers with their children, their grandchildren, and their great-grandchildren, if they also hate me. ⁶But I show mercy to thousands who love me and keep my commandments.

⁷You shall not misuse the name of the LORD your God, for the LORD will not permit anyone who misuses his name to escape unpunished.

⁸Remember the Sabbath day by setting it apart as holy. ⁹Six days you are to serve and do all your regular work, ¹⁰but the seventh day shall be a sabbath rest to the LORD your God. Do not do any regular work, neither you, nor your sons or daughters, nor your male or female servants, nor your cattle, nor the alien who is residing inside your gates, ¹¹for in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and everything that is in them, but he rested on the seventh day. In this way the LORD blessed the seventh day and made it holy.

¹²Honor your father and your mother so that you may spend many days on the land that the LORD your God is giving to you. ¹³You shall not commit murder. ¹⁴You shall not commit adultery. ¹⁵You shall not steal. ¹⁶You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor. ¹⁷You shall not covet your neighbor's house. You shall not covet your neighbor's wife, his male servant, his female servant, his ox, his donkey, or anything else that belongs to your neighbor.

Dear children of our heavenly Father,

The 10 Commandments sound so negative, at least that is what many people think. And maybe they have a point -- eight of ten say: **“You shall not”**. You shall . . . not put someone or something ahead of God, not misuse his name, not have sex except in marriage, not take things that belong to other people, not covet. Many people say, “If those are the rules, I don’t want to play, because those rules cramp my style and hold me down. The Ten Commandments don’t let me be me, don’t let me go where I want to go, do what I want to do. And another thing: The Ten Commandments are unfair and unreasonable, because who can keep them – I mean, seriously? There is no one that can come anywhere close to keeping all of these. Come on, God can’t seriously expect anyone to possibly do keep all these rules!” Today our theme will address these and many other questions about the 10 Commandments:

Theme: What Are The 10 Commandments?

- 1. They come from our Almighty and Gracious God**
- 2. God’s way to lead us to see our sin and our need for a Savior**

Where did the Ten Commandments come from? They came from God, of course. God wants to make this very clear. He wants us to know that he is way more powerful than any of us are – than all of us are together. On a mountain in the Sinai Peninsula, God told Moses and Israel: **“I am the LORD your God, who brought you out from the land of Egypt, where you were slaves.”** What a display of power that was! Plagues to break the stubborn will of the Pharaoh, and then we see the part where God divided the waters of the Red Sea. It was amazing!

“I am the Lord your God” – to our English language ears that sounds like God is simply saying: “I’m the ruler, the one in charge over you.” But to Moses and many in Israel those words meant something more. Remember when God picked Moses for what Moses thought was mission impossible – that he was supposed to go to Egypt and lead the Israelites out of slavery there? It was the day that Moses came upon a burning bush that didn’t burn up and heard a voice from the bush that said: I am the God of...Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.

To each one of those men (Abraham, Isaac and Jacob) God had made a promise that he would give their descendants a land or country of their own some day. To Moses at the bush God was saying that he was about to make that happen, and by the time God gave his commandments to Moses and Israel at Mount Sinai, it was happening. The Israelites had been rescued from Egypt by God and were safely on their way to the Promised Land of Canaan.

So when God began the commandments presentation ceremony with the words, **“I am the Lord your God who brought you out of Egypt, where you were slaves”**, he wasn’t so much reminding Moses and Israel that he is in charge, a very strong being who is not to be messed with, so everybody better listen and listen good. God was also (and especially) reminding the Israelites that the commandments were coming from someone who had remembered and delivered on his promises, who cared about the Israelites, and had done great and good things for them.

That hasn’t changed. Consider your body, with its many parts, senses and systems. Think about the problems and troubles in your life over the years, the ups and downs of life you have experienced, the many horrible ways that some people have treated you.

You have come through and survived them. So we sometimes say, “God is good. He put me together in a wonderful way. He kept his promises to care for me and carry me. God answered my prayers.” Yes, God is good. He’s very good, and that’s where the Ten Commandments are coming from when you read or hear them, whenever they are brought to bear on your life. They’re coming from one who is concerned and caring and very faithful and good to you and me. And that’s the truth he wants us to know!

I had a member that when I asked how he was doing, often said, “I’m better than I deserve.” That is maybe a good answer for all of us as sinners. As God gave us the 10 Commandments, did you see what else God said about himself. He said **“For I the LORD your God am a jealous God. I follow up on the guilt of the fathers with their children, their grandchildren, and their great-grandchildren, if they also hate me.** Maybe we want to overlook this section of the 10 Commandments!

“Hate” is a strong word, but all people are guilty of hating or resenting God, including you and me. The Holy Spirit led the Apostle Paul to write that all people are naturally hostile to God (Rom. 8:7) and Jesus himself said: If anyone loves me, he will obey my teachings (Jn. 14:23). So whenever we

disobey any of God's commandments, we are being hostile and unloving toward God. But God demands unyielding respect and love, and he is jealous about that.

God saying that he is **"jealous"** kind of surprises people, because we think of us being jealous as a bad thing, and it generally is. But it is all right for me to be jealous about my children honoring and obeying me. In fact it is good for me to be very intent – to be zealous – about that, because I deserve respect and honor from my children. That is due me as a parent.

The creator God deserves respect and love from his human creatures, and he is intent on that. God is intent to the point that he says he will punish those who don't love him and respect his commandments. The punishment is for more than life. It goes to eternity – to body and soul being sentenced to separation from God and forever-suffering in hell.

But people because of sin don't have a clear, natural knowledge of God's will and his commandments. Even the Apostles Paul said for a time in his life he didn't know it was wrong to covet. What improved Paul's knowledge? God's commandments did it, because Paul also wrote: I would not have known what coveting really was if the law had not said, **"Do not covet"… Through the law we become conscious of sin." (Rom. 7:7, 3:20).**

Being made aware of our sin seems negative. All too often we hear people say things like this about hearing God's Law: "Ah, stop saying that, you're making me feel bad about myself." But we can't apologize to that person, because that's one of the main reasons why God gave us the 10 Commandments: to show us our sins, to show us that we are in line to be punished by God, and to shove us to our knees and ask God for mercy, for his undeserved love.

That's a positive and good thing. It's a good, because there is a second thing about which God is jealous – very zealous, very passionate. At the presentation of his Ten Commandments, he said, I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God. **"But I show mercy to thousands who love me and keep my commandments."** Keep God's commandments, you and I? "There's the negative again," people say, "because we haven't kept God's commandments and we can't keep them." True, but someone has: God, in his Son Jesus Christ. What a display of love, of zealous passion that is! See the lengths to which God went to show love. He commissioned his Son, who is Lord of the Ten Commandments, to live under and keep those and all God's other commandments here on earth in our place – to do that job for us.

Jesus was given this impossible plan from his heavenly Father and he made it his work. He was jealous about the plan. Jesus was so intent on doing God's will that he let nothing – not even food and family – keep him from it. Obeying God's commandments was Jesus' passion. It was his pleasure and delight, though it wasn't pleasant or delightful for him personally. No, it proved to be shameful and painful for him, more than words can tell or we can imagine; but Jesus kept each and every one of God's commandments perfectly. He kept them to, into and through the point of hell and death on a cross.

Jesus got the beating and punishment we deserve for the times we have hated and been hostile to God. And we get God's forgiveness of each and every one of those times. More than that! Scripture says: **"God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God." (2 Cor. 5:21)** You and I are credited with Jesus' keeping God's commandments. Because of Jesus, God counts us as keeping his commandments; and when that moves you to love God and go where his commandments are heading, go there, because God shows his love to those who love him and obey his commandments. Amen