

Ten Commandments – A Moral Foundation

Read Ex. 20:1-17

While working on his Speak and Spell computer, five year-old Matt typed the words for the computer to say back to him. But, when Matt punched in the word "God," to his surprise, the computer said, "Word not found." He tried again – "Word not found." He stared at the computer in disgust and with raised eyebrows said, "Jesus ...is *not gonna* like this!" Unfortunately, this children's computer game is not the only place where God is missing. Too many omit God from their life *completely* and *far too many* fail to keep Him where He belongs.

Patrick Henry, the first governor of Virginia once said, "...this great nation was founded not by religionists but by Christians; not on religions but on the gospel of Jesus Christ..." Well, times have changed, haven't they? In our nation, built on Biblical morals, posting the Ten Commandments in public now creates a firestorm of controversy. This, of course, *does not* bode well for our future as a nation.

At the other extreme, some folks believe keeping the Ten Commandments is **the key** to salvation. That's just not the case. We live under law of Christ - not under law of Moses! At the same time, a sermon series on Ten Commandments may help offset some of the flawed thinking among Christians. We tend **not** to give the Ten Commandments the attention they deserve. While 92% of Americans own a copy of the Bible and 80% of Americans claim to be Christians, in a survey not long ago only 30% could name even three of the Ten Commandments. An October 2007 survey found people could more easily name the primary ingredients in a *Big Mac* than could name the Ten Commandments. While less than 60% knew "Thou shall not kill" and only 45% recalled the command to "Honor father and mother," **80%** of the same folks knew the Big Mac has two all-beef patties, 76% lettuce, 75% sesame-seed bun, 66% special sauce. Now that's pathetic! Shouldn't Christians know the Ten Commandments?

Jesus, of course, held them in high esteem. Before the new covenant went into effect (Mk. 10:19), the rich young ruler came asking Jesus what he must do to inherit eternal life. Jesus responded, "*You know the commandments: 'Do not commit adultery,' 'Do not murder,' 'Do not steal,' 'Do not bear false witness,' 'Do not defraud,' 'Honor your father and your mother.'*" Jesus again referenced the Ten Commandments in **Mt. 22:34-40** in answer to the question "What is the greatest command?" Paul writes in [Romans 13:10](#), "*Love is the fulfilling of the law.*" In I Jn. 5:3, we read, "*For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not **burdensome.***" ("heavy" - Green's Literal Translation; "are not too hard for us" New Century Version). Jesus adds in Jn. 14:21, "*He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me. And he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him.*" One critical principle we uncover here is that law and love are intertwined. We find this fact in middle of 10 commandments (Ex. 20:6), "(God shows) *mercy to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments.*" Ya see, true love for God leads us to keep God's law - and God's greatest law involves loving God and our neighbor. Priscilla Owens hit the nail on the head with her hymn "Give me the Bible."

*Give me the Bible, holy message shining. Thy light shall guide me in the narrow way
Precept and promise, **law and love combining** Till night shall vanish in eternal day*

J. W. McGarvey wrote, "Love without law is power without direction, and law without love is machinery without a motor."

So let's go back to Mt. 22:34-40. Clearly. #1-4 of Ten Commandments tell us how to love God by having (a) no other gods, (b) no graven images, (c) not taking name of God lightly or irreverently, (d) keeping Sabbath holy.

Meanwhile commandments #5-10 teach us how to love our neighbor: (e) by honoring our parents, (f) by not killing, (g) by not committing adultery, (h) by not stealing, (i) by not bearing false witness, (j) by not coveting.

Let's get something else straight: when God issued the Ten Commandment to his people, was it a blessing or a curse? Sometimes people act as if the law of God is a ball and chain. Which is it – a blessing or a curse?

We see from Psalm 1¹⁻³ *that* God's law is a blessing. Notice again in Rev. 22:14 "*Blessed are they who keep his commands.*" God's law is designed to bless us, to give us the best life possible. The Bible is God's instruction manual for life. And God did us a big favor. I'm not smart enough to do better than God in coming up with a better instruction manual. Are you?

Then someone criticizes the Decalogue, "Yeah, but the Ten Commandments are so negative – 'don't do this, don't do that!'" Nine out of ten commands are framed in the negative and if you're so fragile that *that* rocks your world consider them this way...

- Blessed are those who put God first.
- Blessed are those who need no substitutes for God.
- Blessed are those who honor God's name.
- Blessed are those who honor God's day.
- Blessed are those who honor their parents.
- Blessed are those who value life.
- Blessed are those who keep their marriage vows.
- Blessed are those who respect others property.
- Blessed are those who love the truth.
- Blessed are those who learn art of contentment.

But, listen, boundaries are *beneficial*. That's why we don't let our children play in street. That's why we say, "No!" when they wanna see what will happen when they stick screwdriver in electrical outlet. When we don't know the boundaries, we can find ourselves in an uncomfortable position or even in grave danger.

*Our heavenly Father surely knows best and **that's why** He issued these boundaries, these ten commands to Jews.* Let's take a look at 1st commandment. Ex. 20¹⁻³ *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 bondage. You shall have no other gods before Me.*

Notice that before God issues 10 commandments, He reminds His people **what** He has done for them as an extra incentive for willingly submitting to Him. Remember (Ex. 14:20) at Red Sea when it appeared the Egyptians had Moses & Hebrews trapped - how the angel of God moved the pillar of cloud between the Hebrews and Egyptians. It served as a dense fog to blind Egyptians while giving the Hebrews light. Then God used a strong east wind all night as part of the miracle to enable the Hebrews to cross to freedom. He then sabotaged the Egyptians - drowning Pharaoh's army in Red Sea.

Christians certainly have *far greater* reason to put God first in their life – He let His son, bleed and die for our sins. This is **the** ultimate debt, but Christians in U.S. need to realize how **specially we've** been blessed. It appears God intervened on behalf of English-speaking people and then the U.S.

Take the Spanish Armada. Four centuries ago, Philip II of Spain (who previously supported Spanish Inquisition) set out to rule world and reunite Christianity under Roman Catholic faith and Spain's dominion. When Netherlands declared their independence from Spain in 1588, Philip sailed north with an "invincible" Armada of 130 warships and 30,000 men. Then, while far from home, bad weather hit the fleet. The Spanish Armada fled north through English Channel and around coast of Scotland, where continued fierce storms pushed fleet onto the rocky shores. Strong winds blew in favor of England and against the Spanish Armada. Some of the fleet deviated from their instructions - whether by choice or out of necessity is not known. The fleet perhaps was broken in the heavy weather or fog. In any event, only half of Spanish fleet made it home. For years history books declared, "God blew and they were scattered." And Philip II response to the defeat, "I sent the Armada against men, not God's winds and waves".

Now, *you tell me* if there was not Divine intervention during the American Revolution. "At the battle of Brooklyn Heights, the American troops lost more than 1,000 men. The British were on the verge of capturing all our troops and bringing the rebellion to an early close. But the British, for some reason, delayed the final siege. Then, rain and fog miraculously set in, providing cover for the American troops to evacuate Long Island undetected across the river... (*The Spirit of America*, Bennett, pp. 393–394).

Another source reports, most of the American soldiers were in a trap, facing 20,000 British regulars at the fore, and a mile-wide river at their backs. All the British navy had to do was to move a few warships up the East River to prevent Washington's escape, and the war would be over, the revolution aborted. This should have been easy for the British navy—the most powerful navy in the world.

Without divine help in the form of a favorable wind, the Revolutionary War would have ended in disaster for Washington and his troops.

However, the harrowing ordeal did not end with the coming of dawn. As darkness gave way to early morning light, many of Washington's men were still on Long Island. They were running out of time! "But again, 'the elements' interceded, this time in the form of pea-soup fog. It was called 'a peculiar providential occurrence,' 'manifestly providential,' 'an unusual fog,' 'a friendly fog,' 'an American fog.'" On the New York side there was *no fog*, but on the Long Island side of the river, as one American soldier recalled, "it was so dense, that I could scarcely discern a man at six yards' distance" (*ibid.*, p. 52). Even in daylight, fog concealed the entire operation.

The entire maneuver was completed by 7:00 the next morning, taking 13 hours to ferry 9,000 men, their horses and equipment across the East River. "And in less than an hour after, *the fog having dispersed*, the enemy was visible on the shore we had left" (McCullough, p. 191).

Another little-known fact about Battle of Brooklyn Heights... Long before British arrived in NY, *George Washington had called for a day of fasting and prayer!* As commentator William Bennett notes, "Waiting in New York for the British General Howe and his troops to return from Halifax, Washington issued the order on May 15 for prayer, fasting, and humble supplication to the Lord for His continued blessings." Washington was beseeching God for success—and for His personal guidance—three months before that crucial battle!

An even less known fact: General Washington (who was sprinkled as an infant in the Episcopalian church) one day went to John Gano, chaplain in Continental Army, and exclaimed: "I have been investigating the Scripture, and I believe immersion to be the baptism taught in the Word of God, and I demand it at your hands. I do not wish any parade made or the army called out, but simply a quiet demonstration of the ordinance." In presence of 42 witnesses, Washington was immersed in the Potomac River.

Another amazingly timed wartime weather incident: evacuation of Dunkirk during WWII. In June 1940, 400,000

British and French soldiers were trapped on north coast of France at Dunkirk. The Nazi forces were only ten miles away and could have cornered Allied troops. But, **thick fog** and clouds settled over the beaches. The English Channel became unusually calm, and many small boats from England were able to ferry soldiers to safety. The protective weather pattern **lasted 9 days** while the men were evacuated. The Allied army was thus preserved to fight another day. Winston Churchill called the evacuation of Dunkirk a "miracle of deliverance."

These historical accounts remind me of several scriptures: "*Righteousness exalts a nation.*" Prov. 14:34 "*Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord.*" (Ps 33:12) Consider the stern warning in Dt. 8^{11,19,20} "*Beware that you do not forget the Lord your God by not keeping His commandments, His judgments, and His statutes which I command you today... Then it shall be, if you by any means forget the Lord your God, and follow other gods, and serve them and worship them, I testify against you this day that... As the nations which the Lord destroys before you, so you shall perish, because you would not be obedient to the voice of the Lord your God.*"

So, if God were to speak to us today He could say to us, "*I am the LORD your God, who brought you out from the tyranny of Philip II of Spain and Roman Catholic dominance, who brought you out of British bondage and rescued you from Nazi tyranny – and more importantly bondage of Satan and sin. You shall have no other gods before Me.*"

While we're under the new law of Christ, not the old Law of Moses, the Ten Commandments written by the finger of God lay a moral foundation for His people with relevant applications for the Christian today. Join us in future weeks as we explore their significance for us today.