

Scripture Lesson Exodus 20:1-17 selected verses

Do you remember the first week of our series on rethinking the Ten Commandments that I said in the Garden of Eden God only had one rule? Does anyone remember the rule?

You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil... Genesis 2:16-17

Would you do me a favor and on your outline circle that word 'free.' We'll come back to that later in the message.

That one commandment served as a daily reminder of God's authority over humanity. Obedience to that one rule, or we could say a willingness to 'trust' God, was all that was necessary to keep everything in order. As long as Adam and Eve trusted God they could experience maximum freedom in the Garden.

But when Adam and Eve stopped trusting God the world was changed. Sin, and something we're going to talk about today, selfishness, made the world a dangerous place. Think about it this way: if you've ever been any place that is dangerous you know that the more danger that is present the more rules there are to keep everyone safe. So, as sin flourished and selfishness expanded; the world needed more than God's one original rule.

The purpose of God's original rule was to protect Adam and Eve's freedom within the Garden. When God added the Ten Commandments its purpose, even though people don't see it that way was to protect the freedom of those God loves.

Let's go back and look at Adam and Eve for a moment.

They were convinced that God was trying to keep something good from them. The serpent got them to think that God could not be trusted. As a result, Adam and Eve believed that God's rule was preventing them from experiencing something good and that they could not trust God's rule to be for *my* good.

Now if you ever wondered when selfishness entered the world it is right here. Adam and Eve stopped trusting God and started trusting in themselves. And you and I have been plagued with that curse of selfishness ever since. And the result of our selfishness has been broken relationships; with God and with one another.

Look at most of the problems you have in your relationships and at the heart of those problems is selfishness. And the selfishness probably stems from you feeling a loss of freedom.

Let's think of a real practical example. Anyone here ever tried to raise a two year old or a teenager? Same issues, just ten years apart. Two year olds and teens want freedom. They are also rather selfish; after all what's a two year olds' favorite word: mine. That's just a microcosm of what all our lives revolve around. We are focused on ourselves and above all we want our freedom! That makes us think that being free ultimately means trusting in me and no one else.

So when God was giving the Ten Commandments to Moses; and remember we said these were rules for people who had never had rules before; God was attempting to provide maximum freedom while safeguarding relationships from selfishness.

Let's take a look at how this works in the Ten Commandments. If you were here two weeks ago we spent the entire message on the first two commandments. In that message, which you can read or listen to online, we talked about how God wants to have first place in our lives.

In those two commandments and in the third and fourth God was attempting to set boundaries in which the divine relationship could be safeguarded from our selfishness. Keeping God first in our lives, honoring him in our lives and remembering God's daily provision for us were all commands that pointed out God's place of authority in our lives.

So to trust in ourselves and to live outside the authority of God is to realize the same problem that has been plaguing the world since the Garden. And remember that God doesn't place these rules in our life to smother us but to offer us freedom. God's rules as to how we relate to God are presented in a way that demonstrates God's grace toward us and are never intended to be overbearing.

Before I say anything about the remaining six commandments let me ask you this. As a parent, did you ever say 'no' to your child? When they asked you 'why,' have you ever said 'I just need you to trust me.'?

That is what God wants to say to us this morning. "Just trust me!" Trust me that these rules are not intended to handcuff you from enjoying life; but to protect you and give you freedom.

If we begin to see God's law from his perspective we understand that the law is an expression of God's grace. And not only that, the commandments are a reflection of what God values. The first four commandments demonstrate God's value of his relationship with us and the remaining six demonstrate God's value of our relationships with one another.

I think it is interesting that the first of these final six commandments relate to our parents. And notice that this is the one commandment that comes with a promise; a

promise that directly impacts the future individually and corporately. Later in Deuteronomy 6, a passage we looked at two weeks ago and places great emphasis on the role of parents in teaching their children the commandments; the future of the nation rested in parents transferring their love of God on to their children.

But there is one other thing about this commandment. If we grow up honoring our parents then more than likely you will also honor others.

- Don't murder means honoring other people's bodies.
- Don't commit adultery means honoring one another's marriages.
- Don't steal means honoring other people's property and possessions.
- Don't give false testimony means honoring the reputation of others.
- Don't covet means honoring what you have been given.

So honoring others is just another way of saying don't be selfish. Don't put your needs and desires ahead of others. Honoring others is also a great way to recognize that our freedom is not intended to hold us back but to protect the lives, relationships and property of others and ourselves.

So God's law reveals our selfishness and offers us freedom.

Beyond all the other practical and temporal reasons that God established his law there is an eternal purpose: to confront our sin and to demonstrate our need for a Savior. As the scripture says, God didn't give us the Law to make us good. God gave the Law to expose our sin.

God knew from the beginning that humanity would not and could not keep his law perfectly, even when reduced to ten simple rules of conduct. That is why God made provisions for those who break the Law. Restitution, punishment, and the need for repentance all this can be found in the Law. As the Law exposed our sin it stood as a constant reminder that we needed grace.

God has provided his law to enable us to maintain our freedom from sin and its consequences. Isn't it true that your greatest regrets would have been avoided if you had opted to obey rather than disobey God's law? Isn't it true that you would be free from certain painful and shameful memories if you had honored your relationships with God and others.?

God's grace is revealed in the giving of the Law and the provision of Jesus who made it possible for us to be restored to a relationship with God.

And the greatest act of God's grace is how God restored our relationship through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Remember that word I asked you to circle at the beginning of the sermon, what was it? That's right it was the word free. We think that freedom means trusting in self and no one else. But true freedom is found not in our independence but in our sole dependence upon God

Today if you want to find true freedom for living it is bringing your life under the authority of Jesus Christ, receiving God's grace and trusting that God wants the best for your life.

rethinking the Ten Commandments

Week 4

Scripture Lessons: Exodus 20:1-17 Matthew 5:21-22

One Rule

You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil... Genesis 2:16-17

The rule was a daily reminder of God's authority over humanity.

As long as Adam and Eve trusted God they could experience maximum freedom in the Garden.

What is the hardest part about placing yourself under the authority of another person or of God?

The Lie

The serpent got Adam and Eve to think God could not be trusted.

Adam and Eve stopped trusting God and started trusting in themselves.

How does selfishness create problems in relationships?

Maximum Freedom

In the Ten Commandments, God was attempting to provide maximum freedom while safeguarding relationships from selfishness.

Freedom does not sound like a benefit of rules. Why do we see rules as handcuffs to our freedom?

Our Relationship with God

Keeping God first in our lives, honoring him in our lives and remembering God's daily provision for us were all commands that pointed out God's place of authority in our lives.

See Deuteronomy 6:4-5

God's Perspective

The first four commandments demonstrate God's value of his relationship with us and the remaining six demonstrate God's value of our relationships with one another.

If we look at the Ten Commandments from God's perspective does it change our understanding of what God is doing with these rules?

Our Relationship with Others

If we grow up honoring our parents then more than likely you will also honor others.

Honoring others is also a great way to recognize that our freedom is not intended to hold us back but to protect the lives, relationships and property of others and ourselves.

If you look at the Ten Commandments from a place of honoring others, how does that change your selfish attitude?

Our Need for a Savior

God has provided his law to enable us to maintain our freedom from sin and its consequences. Isn't it true that your greatest regrets would have been avoided if you had opted to obey rather than disobey God's law? Isn't it true that you would be free from certain painful and shameful memories?

Today if you want to find true freedom for living it is bringing your life under the authority of Jesus Christ, receiving God's grace and trusting that God wants the best for your life.

Next Week: NEW SERIES: Christian Atheist

I Believe in God, But... Matthew 7:21-27

Series Key Verse: Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says. James 1:22