

Exodus 20:1-17

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[0:00] Good morning. We're reading from Exodus chapter 20 and we'll read verse 1 to 17. And God spoke all these words.

I am the Lord your God who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. You shall have no other gods before me. You shall not make for yourself an image in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below.

You shall not bow down to them or worship them, for I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the parents to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me, but showing love to a thousand generations of those who love me and keep my commandments.

You shall not misuse the name of the Lord your God, for the Lord will not hold anyone guiltless who misuses his name. Remember the Sabbath day by keeping 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, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your male or female servant, nor your animals, nor any foreigner residing in your towns. For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea and all that is in them, but he rested on the seventh day.

[1:18] Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy. Honor your father and mother, so that you may live long in the land the Lord your God is giving you. You shall not murder.

You shall not commit adultery. You shall not steal. You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor. You shall not covet your neighbor's house. You shall not covet your neighbor's wife or his male or female servants, his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor.

We're going to be looking at all Ten Commandments. We were going to do it for two weeks, but the way it worked out, we're doing it in one. So buckle your spiritual seatbelts as we dive into it.

But when it comes to the Ten Commandments and you just sort of, those words sort of start to mull around in your mind, thinking where are we going to go with this, what are we going to do, we kind of maybe instinctively go different places depending on our background and experience.

Some of us come from a more kind of legalistic background in terms of Christianity that tended to produce a sort of very wooden form of Christian faith and wooden sort of adherence to these things.

[2:29] And ended up actually, though we believe in a salvation by faith alone, we actually ended up using our works righteousness to think that we got credit with God and somehow he loved us more.

But maybe you're from a sort of different background that tended to kind of sort of dismiss the Old Testament and not because it wasn't true, but just thinking we find more relevance in the New Testament. Ten Commandments don't really have any relevance, not really looked at them before and so on, and not sure what to make of them.

And some of us, though, I think maybe because of our experience in looking at some of the more difficult books of the Bible recently, maybe Genesis and Revelation, are just intrigued, thinking, ah, that's interesting, we're going to look at it afresh and think, where are we going to go?

How are we going to understand it? What's God going to say to us this morning? But actually, for some others of us, because we're new to the Christian faith, and just sort of our experience so far has really maybe been just sort of encountering Jesus speaking about the law in Christianity Explored and in Mark's Gospel, we're a bit confused because in Christian Explored, we learn that we are 100% saved, not by our good works, because those can never earn us enough to get credit, in a sense, to get to heaven, it's by faith and trusting in Jesus Christ and His completed work for us on the cross, vindicated through His resurrection, and as we've been born again by the Holy Spirit.

So it kind of, when you think, you know, you're young in the faith and thinking, well, here we are looking at commandments about to-dos and not-to-dos, how does this all fit with the Christian faith? And hopefully, as we look at the Ten Commandments and we think about this this morning, what we begin to see is that our experience of the Ten Commandments before we become Christians is different from that of our experience of it after we become Christians, that before we become Christians, what we find is that they end up just sort of convicting us because we realize, actually, I can never keep these.

[4:23] When we truly understand all that the sort of laws demands, if you like, think, I can never fulfill this completely, I can never do this perfectly. And so it just, all it does is convict and condemn.

But when we become Christians, we realize that, actually, that's, we're not dependent on the law for our righteousness or being right with God, that's all done through Jesus, that actually the Ten Commandments then become, not convicting, but helping to cultivate the new life that we are discovering in Jesus.

And that's basically where we're going this morning. If you kind of get nothing else from this morning, thinking about our experience before of convicting us and condemning us, and our experience after becoming Christians of helping to cultivate our new life in Christ.

And I want to sort of look at three things. One is sort of Jesus and the law, secondly, Paul and the law, and then believers and the law. And really, I want to start with Jesus and the law, because for some of you, you know, that's kind of maybe been your only experience of sort of thinking about things like the Ten Commandments, because, you know, when you look through Mark's gospel and Christianity explored and came across it there.

So, for example, in Mark chapter 12, you want to just turn, we're going to sort of briefly go through quite a few scriptures, but that's page 1018. Keep a finger or something in Exodus 20, we'll go back there.

[5:44] And we're a teacher of the law is testing Jesus here in this passage on his knowledge of various parts of the law. And as part of that inquisition, if you like, verse 28, he asks Jesus which Jesus would consider the most important commandment.

And Jesus sums up the first four commandments by quoting, in verse 30, by quoting Deuteronomy chapter 6, verse 5. And he's quoting, he's summing up the first four commandments, which are, you know, to love the Lord your God with all your strength, with all your heart, with your soul, and so on. And then he said the second one's like it, and this time he's quoting Leviticus chapter 19, verse 18. And he's summing up the commandments 5 to 10, in the words, love your neighbor as yourself. And what Jesus was doing there wasn't new, that was sort of generally understood as kind of a summation that the commandments are really about love. Love for God, commandments 1 to 4, and then love for your neighbor, commandments 5 to 10.

Or maybe you came across it again in Mark's gospel in chapter 10. It's page 1, just over the page, and 1014, where a rich ruler asks, verse 17, what he needs to do to earn his way to get to heaven.

[7:06] And Jesus says to him, well, if that's the way, if you think that you can earn it, then you know the commandments. Verse 19, no murder, no adultery, no stealing, no false testimony, no defrauding, honoring your father and mother, and all of these things.

And if you've looked at that before, maybe you looked at it in Christianity Explored, what you notice is that Jesus is only referring to the second set of, you know, commandments 5 to 10, the second table of the law.

It's sometimes called about loving your neighbor. And the guy goes, well, you know, good, excellent. I've done, as far as I know, I've done all of that all of my days. But then Jesus turns to him and says, well, here's something else that you need to do if you want to fulfill the first four, and that's give up your wealth.

And the guy was very sad because that was actually, Jesus had pointed, you know, he put his finger on his true God. The thing that he loved more than God, that he was looking to for security, more than he was looking for it in the Lord, was his wealth.

That's where he found it. That ultimately was his God, the thing that he loved and was greater in his affection, more than God was. And so the man went away very sad because he had much wealth.

[8:22] Or maybe you came across Jesus talking about the law in the Sermon on the Mount, Matthew's gospel. Matthew is really interesting, the way that he tries to paint Jesus and picture Jesus as the greater Moses, which is fascinating as we go through the book of Exodus.

Because Moses, Matthew has his gospel in five parts, mirroring in a sense the first five books of the Bible, known as the first five books of Moses. Matthew focuses on Jesus, teaching from the mountain, the law and the Beatitudes and so on.

And all the while painting Moses as the greater Moses, Jesus as the greater Moses, the one that Moses pointed to, who would come and lead the great Exodus, not out of, from slavery to Pharaoh, but out of our slavery to sin and to death and to Satan, to lead us to the promised lands.

But whilst Matthew, Jesus is unpacking these things in Matthew chapter five, and that's page 968, if you want to look it up, verse 21. Jesus sort of starts speaking about the law.

And he sort of unpacks both the kind of the outside, the thing that we see visibly in terms of do not, but also the inside of it and the thing that's underneath it and the real depth of these very simple words that we read in Exodus 20.

[9:46] So Matthew chapter five, verse 21. So Jesus said, You have heard it said to the people long ago, You shall not murder, and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment.

But I tell you that anyone who is angry with a brother or sister will be subject to judgment. Again, anyone who says to a brother or sister, Raka is answerable, which means you fool, is answerable to a court.

Anyone who says you fool will be in danger of the fire of hell. So there's a root there that Jesus is saying that's leading to the ultimate fruit of those simple words that we see in the commandments. That actually to reach that point of kind of murder, it starts a long way back with that kind of developing issue with anger that comes out in fits of rage and so on.

There's a root that leads to the fruit of disobedience of those things outlined in the commandments. It does the same with adultery in verse 27. He says the root is that second look, that lustful look, and so on.

[10:49] And then there's these intriguing words in verse 17. He says this, Do you not think that I have come to abolish the law? It means the Ten Commandments, so the prophets.

I have not come to abolish them, but to fulfill them. For truly, I tell you, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter nor the least stroke of the pen will by any means disappear from the law until everything is accomplished.

Therefore, anyone who sets aside one of the least of these commands and teaches others accordingly will be called least in the kingdom of heaven. But whoever practices and teaches these commands will be called great in the kingdom of God.

That's intriguing, isn't it? Jesus saying, I'm not here to abolish the law. I'm here to fulfill it for you, but I'm not here to abolish it. Because the law, these Ten Commandments, represent something of the perfect character of God.

They're an extension of the perfect nature and character of God, aren't they? And so they are beautiful. And so they are good. And so they're right. And they're not to be abolished, but how their place in our lives needs to be addressed.

[11:57] And that's what Jesus is referring to or alluding to when he says, I've come to fulfill them. And then there's the absolute sting in the tail in Matthew 5, verse 20. For I tell you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of God.

That was devastating news for those who were listening at the time. Because the Pharisees and teachers of the law were, in their eyes at least, but in many ways outwardly looked kind of squeaky clean.

No one would ever be able to live like them. They were pretty extreme in the way that they lived. But that's exactly Jesus' point. That we can't use the Ten Commandments to earn our salvation. None of us are going to be able to live that kind of perfect life that the law demands. And that's why Jesus came. And that's why in another place, he has another conversation with somebody else who says, you know, good teacher, how can we enter the kingdom of God?

It's not a question of what do I need to do to earn it? But how do we get there? And he says, I actually need to be born again. He's like, what do you mean? He said, you need the Spirit of God to work in your life.

[13:06] To lead you to repentance and faith and trust in me, as ultimately he was talking about. So maybe you have encountered the law there and heard Jesus speak about these things.

And kind of tried to navigate and think through what is the place of this law that Jesus speaks about. But really it's at that point where Jesus is saying, you're never going to get there by trying to earn it. You need to be born again. And there's another way through my fulfilling it for you and receiving that into your life that you're going to be able to get there. But it's at that point that Paul, in a sense, picks up the topic as well.

And Jesus, in a sense, passes the baton on in Scripture to Paul. And we've been looking through Romans and Sunday evenings. It's been really helpful.

And you want to flick over to Romans chapter 1. And, you know, I'm just going to talk in very general details about Romans. But Paul's really clear in the first three chapters that whether you're deeply religious or whether you're irreligious, it doesn't matter.

[14:08] Actually, you're going to find yourself all in the same boat. And what is that same boat? Well, it is what he diagnoses in chapter 3, verse 23, that all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God.

Whether we're religious or irreligious, we've all fallen short. None of us will be able to enter heaven by our good works because we all fall short. And because we fall short, Romans chapter 6, verse 23, the wages of that falling short, the wages of sin is death.

It is condemnation, not salvation. So the law, in our experience, before we become Christians, convicts and condemns. It is beautiful and it is true and it is good.

But our problem is that we find it almost impossible to, or completely impossible, to fulfill it completely. And therefore use it as a means to get to heaven by good life and good works and good living.

And then Paul goes on in Romans chapter 7. You want to flick over to that page 1133 if you're new to it and wondering where it is. And he explains that actually when we don't know the law, we're a bit ignorant of it.

[15:17] You know, kind of, we don't realize that we're falling short of it. Although our conscience might be tweaked every now and again. But basically we're ignoring it and not even realizing we're falling short. But when we come across it, and when the Holy Spirit begins to get at work in our lives, that we see not only the outside of it, but the inward, the inside of it, and the depth of the implications of each of those ten simple statements, actually we begin to realize that we are sunk.

We just fall incredibly short of sort of fulfilling what it is that God asks of us. The finding the thing that is meant to keep us right with God in Exodus 20 ends up separating us from him, realizing that he is utterly holy and beautiful and just we are so not.

And so it convicts us and condemns us. And so Romans 7 ends at a pretty bleak note. Verse 25, so then he says, I in my mind am a slave to God's law, and in my sinful nature a slave to the law of sin. That at both counts, just of kind of just looking at God's law and my complete inability to keep law, because I'm powerless to do it, I'm absolutely sunk.

This good, very good and beautiful thing, this wisdom of God in just ten simple laws, ten simple sentences or words, this thing that was meant to keep the people of God safe and in the love of God and love for one another, to flourish and thrive.

[16:50] Paul says we just find ourselves utterly powerless to keep. And so it condemns us and convicts us. And of course, even back in Exodus, as we go on, we'll discover that there's provision for atonement, for forgiveness in the Old Testament.

Because God knew even though giving these beautiful things, we would fall short. And so there was the provision of forgiveness through the sacrificial system. But even those provisions, they were just, we know, weren't we?

They were just a signpost, a placeholder of the true place that they and we would receive forgiveness of sins, our new nature and a new power, which is, of course, the cross at Calvary, where Jesus died for the forgiveness of our sins.

The resurrection from the tomb, the vindication that what he accomplished was true and valid and acceptable before God, and the promised Holy Spirit that would bring us alive to God and the reality of the kingdom of God and the life of God that he had for us alive into our souls when we're born again.

So in Romans 7, Paul kind of springs deep down into the trampoline, if you like, so that, in a sense, he can rise up to the heights of Romans chapter 8.

[18:06] That in Romans 7, chapters 1 to 7, yes, the law utterly condemns, but through Christ, when we come to Christ, when he has fulfilled the law for us and through repentance and faith, we

receive that, what he has won for us into our lives.

When the Holy Spirit comes and brings us alive to God, what happens? He says, well, Romans chapter 8, verse 1, then, having received Christ, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus because through Christ Jesus, and that's an important phrase, of the law of the Spirit who gives life has set us free from the law of sin and death that condemned and convicted for what the law was powerless to do, and we experienced that.

We just couldn't fulfill it. What it was powerless to do because it was weakened by the flesh, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh to be a sin offering. And so he condemned sin in the flesh in order that the righteous requirements of the whole life may be fully met in us who do not live according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit.

So what is Paul saying? What is happening? What is happening in our lives when we become Christians? What does this Spirit-filled new life look like?

Well, of course, we know from Galatians chapter 5, it looks like a beautiful, Jesus-fruitful life of love and joy and peace and patience and goodness and kindness, but I think also irony of ironies, and Paul points us to that in Romans chapter 8, and beauty of beauties, we live according to the new law of the Spirit, which he mentions there in verse 2.

[19:41] And what does that new law of the Spirit look like? Actually, it looks a lot like the law in Exodus chapter 20, the Ten Commandments. We're set free from it to fulfill it, to live it, to enjoy it, to rejoice in it, to let it cultivate, help cultivate the new life and what that looks like to the Christ-like life in us.

The law, then, that used to convict and condemn now helps cultivate this new life in us and conforms us to the life of Christ. You see, the experience of the law before we become Christians, convict and condemn, but after we become Christians, when we're set free from the law's demands because it's fulfilled in Jesus, actually the law becomes something that helps to cultivate what the new life in Christ looks like.

And again, Paul's sort of wrestling with these things and answering some of the questions. In Romans chapter 3, verse 31, if you want to have a look at it, you know, he asked the question, does our justification by faith in Christ alone nullify this law, the Ten Commandments?

He said, absolute, by no means, not at all. Rather, we uphold the law. By nature, the Spirit kind of leads us and helps us to fulfill the things that are represented in the character of God and in the character of the new life that we see in the perfect law of God.

We're not using it as a means to be saved, but because we are saved. These things just make complete sense to us and we strive falteringly to fulfill them. And I hope that's kind of helpful if you're new to the Christian faith and trying to get a grasp on Exodus 20, but also I hope that as we start a new year and a new chapter in a sense, our souls are saying, and the Holy Spirit's kind of confirming and our hearts, actually, this is what I want.

[21:43] Our spirit crying out within us, Lord, yes, please, more of you in my life, in every area of my life. More love for you.

More love for my neighbor. More love, as Jesus says, you know, and adding in another commandment, more love for one another. More fruit, more Christ-likeness. More of your presence changing, transforming, helping, strengthening, guiding in the everyday situations, in my workplace, in my home, when things are easy and when things are tough.

So let's look again at the Ten Commandments. Let's turn back to Exodus 20. I hope that look at sort of Jesus and the law, Paul and the law, just sort of helps us kind of understand the position of the law and why it's a great thing to be looking at the Ten Commandments together.

Remembering that God wrote these things with you and I in mind to help us live lives safely in Christ.

Not saved by these things, but helped by them. So let's look at believers in the law. Let's look at chapter 20, verse one. And God spoke all these words. Verse two, I am the Lord your God who brought you out of slavery, out of the land of slavery.

[23:09] Out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. And so notice there how he describes himself. He is the Lord. It's the covenant name that he's using. I am your God's who has promised, covenanted, bound himself to you.

And it is me that has redeemed you. You have not redeemed yourself. I have done the work. I have redeemed you from slavery. I, the Lord, holy, mighty, gracious.

I'm now speaking words that are gonna keep you safe and able to enjoy the freedom for which I have set you free. So here's the first word, verse three.

You shall have no other gods before me. Of course, that's a no-brainer, isn't it? For them then, the gods of the nations round about, well, they were cruel. They were unpredictable. They extracted a high price.

You read on in Exodus, as we'll do at some point, and you read that the nations around it was child sacrifice or amorous sex acts with temple prostitutes or with animals that were, in part, they're worshipped to appease the gods.

[24 : 16] And today, for those of us who come from backgrounds where many gods are leading and worshipped, we're set free from that. They're seen for what they are, demonic deceptions that we gladly leave behind for the one true and living God who has acted on our behalf to redeem us through the cross.

For those of us who come maybe from the Western world and have absorbed the sort of modern ideas, we're actually the gods of the age are ourselves.

We are our own gods. We get to determine who we are. We are the creators of our own being, identity, and destiny. And we make the decision.

And the call is to leave that notion behind and to serve and live for the one only and true gods. But more positively, what God is doing here is restoring to an extent what was lost in the garden and what is in an anticipation of what will be in glory.

It's restoring that relationship with him. And it is a restoration of what was and what will be and what is to be in the interim, if you like, between those two times.

[25 : 37] He as our gods, we as his people, fidelity to the faithful one who offers the right way and the best way and the true way to live that restores our humanity as we discover what that humanity was meant to look like as we live our lives for Christ.

So that's the first word. No other gods before me. The second word, verse four, no images, no bang down to them. And we might think, well, no danger. I'm not going to do that. But you just have to look at what happens, you know, just following on from this account in the book of Exodus.

Because what are the, while Moses is up on the mountain, what are the people doing? You know, they've been redeemed by God. They've seen God work in mighty saving acts through taking them out of Egypt and the crossing of the Red Sea and so on, the plagues.

And what are they doing? They're bowing down to a golden calf, to an idol. These things happen very quickly in our hearts. John Calvin said this often.

He said that our hearts are a perpetual idol factory. And an idol, we've said, is that anything in our lives that is more important to us than God, that has a greater place than Christ in our affections.

[26 : 50] it's usually a created thing that we've put in the creator's place, a good thing that we've made a God thing that ultimately we look to for our identity, our security, our meaning, our value and purpose, all the things that we're supposed to extract from and find in the Lord.

And these created things that we make creator things, God things that we make good things, they are good servants, they're often good things, but they make poor masters and they demand more and more, they never satisfy.

And God wants to release us from that dynamic. Don't get caught up in that. Find the freedom for which I've set you free, not the slavery again to these idols that we put over ourselves.

True freedom, these verses are saying, is found in surrendering all these idols, all these things over to him. being able to say to the Lord that even in the very worst scenario, even there, I will love you, I will trust you with my life because I know that my only true hope, and we sing this, my only true hope for life and death is found in you.

You truly are my anchor, the one in whom I trust through thick and thin in life. That's what we want, isn't it?

[28 : 14] Amen? And in these verses, he's saying, I'm zealous to keep our relationship intact, my relationship with you, your relationship with me, so that you might enjoy the freedom for which I have set you free.

Then the third word, verse seven, no misusing the name of the Lord in vain. Now yes, that means not using the name of God or Jesus as a swear word or lightly, but more than that, it's the name of the Lord tells us about the character of the Lord.

You know, and so the name of the Lord, the psalmist, is a strong tower, the righteous run into it and we are saved. It's interesting that when the Aaronic blessing in number six is pronounced, we say, the Lord, we invoke his name and by invoking his name we call upon his character, the Lord, who we know from Exodus 34 is good and gracious, slow to anger and abiding in love, the Lord, bless you, this Lord bless you and keep you as we take his name on our lips, we're recalling his character and we're recalling and calling on that subsequent blessing that he is able to give us.

The covenant name is evoked as we accept that name we accept the blessing but when we use that name in vain, not treating it with reverence, we use it so lightly and we're living as if we're rejecting the blessing and the character of the one that that name represents and I hope that as we're looking through these things you can feel how this is not so much law but it's love.

It's helping us to know as believers how we can love him and enjoy the freedom for which he has set us free. How we can enjoy his love for us, our love for him.

[30 : 15] Now we sense how the Holy Spirit is helping us to understand the external of it. Yes, the black and white, the words in black and white that are there but also the internal aspect of it that Jesus talked about.

Can you feel how as we look at these things that they lead us on the paths of righteousness that the psalmist talked about in Psalm 23 by green pastures and still waters that these are the paths in which the shepherd himself is leading us.

The fourth word, verse eight, remember the Sabbath day and keep it holy. Now as a young believer, I was schooled in a sort of strict Sabbatarian culture.

culture. As a student, I didn't study or work on a Sunday. Actually, I still think there is great wisdom in that. It's one of the reasons why I stopped competing and running on a Sunday because of that. I think, in retrospect, I might have done things differently but that's what I thought was the right thing to do at the time. We all have to work out what these things mean for us before the Lord.

[31 : 28] And especially in light of how these things have been fulfilled as Jesus says in Matthew 5 in Christ, we've shifted from the Sabbath being the Saturday which it was to Resurrection Day.

They worshipped on the first day of the week and we moved our day of worship to Sunday. But to think in terms of what we can't do on a Sunday is probably the wrong way to think about this one day and seven principle that is espoused here.

Because this command is not just about one day. It's really about the whole week. The Sabbath, Sunday, is a day of rest and refreshment in the Lord.

The day that actually reconditions the rest of the week. Because in order to take a day for the Lord, which he patterned for us in creation as we saw in Genesis in those early chapters and patterned for us in what it means to be made in his image that we take one day rest from our work.

We find that as we try and work out how to do that, we need to, it reconditions the rest of it. We need to think about how we work in the rest of the six days to ensure that we are free to do that on this one day.

[32 : 46] The day in which we in a sense lay down our tools and say, Lord, and acknowledge you are Lord over my life. A day to lay down the reins of our lives and say, Lord, you reign and refresh ourselves in these great truths.

It's interesting that in Genesis, as God created the world in the seven-day pattern, it was that Sunday or the Sabbath was the last day of the week for the Lord and the day that he rested, but actually for Adam and Eve, it's the first day of the week.

The Lord's saying, I want you to be refreshed on that day and then go out and do the things that I've called you to do. And actually, the older I get, the more wisdom I'm reminded is in that one-in-seven-day pattern.

That's why I personally enjoy going to morning and evening sermons. It's the Lord's day. It's a gift to be fed and encouraged to fellowship together and try and work everything around.

Obviously, it's a bit different when you're the preacher, but to have that pattern of one day and seven. Then the fifth word, verse 12, honour your father and mother.

[34 : 02] It's interesting that having had these first four commandments, isn't it, which are up with Jesus says and acknowledges the scripture about loving God, then to move into the next section of six commands, into loving our neighbour and loving one another.

It's interesting that the place that it moves to first is actually the home and honouring a father and mother. And it's not too surprising because God has given three areas of governance for the

ordering of life.

There's the church, which gives nurture and instruction for living as a people of God. There's the state, which gives nurture and instruction for living as nations of God. And there's the home, in which nurture and instruction for growing up in the redeeming love of God is given, preparing children for the day, if we're able to have children, preparing for the day that they leave home. And so honouring the wise and godly, loving, nurturing of parents when we're young takes the form of obedience. But when we leave the home as adults and our parents are still with us, and we create a new home or family unit, that kind of changes, doesn't it?

and it takes the form of honouring and respecting them. And there are many ways in which being in a fallen world can be hard, because there are abusive parents.

[35 : 26] There are parents who live in a dishonourable way towards one another and in the world. And I have seen some brave ways even amongst us, and folks from that kind of situation have sought to honour their parents over time, even though previous circumstances have been most dishonourable.

And of course there is the inside of this external command, in which as parents, if we are parents, the call is to live lives worthy of the honour which we are accorded.

Then there's the sixth word, you shall not murder, we dealt with the externals and internals of this earlier, so how Jesus addresses the root and the fruits, and how we value life as believers, from the womb to the tomb, protecting the lives of those who are his image bearers, made in his image.

Then the seventh word, verse 14, you shall not commit adultery. Again, Jesus dealt with it similarly in Matthew chapter 5. He's saying there's an external act and the roots to it that kind of lead to it. And actually there's a lot going on there that our work can be as much a mistress or a lover as anything else, luring us to spend time with it, whispering, I will make you great, love me and I will love you, I will fulfil and satisfy you, but is never truly able to live up to the demands.

[37 : 08] Also speaking into this is the destructive influence of pornography and the impact that that has on our ability to relate well with members of the opposite sex. The devastating impact of social media on marriage as we hide in that world and are distracted by it and are lured by it.

But on these things, let me quote the seasoned pastor Sinclair Ferguson who actually helped me a great deal in summarising the commandments as I look through it. He says this, he says, the real truth is that adultery is destructive of God's best purposes.

And it's as simple as that. In the nature of the case, it isn't a private matter, whatever people say it destroys at least one relationship, one marriage and perhaps two. It inevitably has an effect on any children, on parents and friends, it has financial repercussions as well as familial ones.

It strikes at the very fabric of society which as pastors often see at wedding services, can be strong and happy only when the marriage bond is held in honour.

Yes, there can be forgiveness, even for this, but in God's economy, forgiveness isn't like the programme in your computer that can switch everything back to an earlier state so that you can begin again.

[38 : 30] There will be lasting repercussions for the rest of our lives and perhaps for the lives of others too. Then he goes on and says, Jesus says, it all begins and all always begins with a Luke.

It does, doesn't it? Yes, there were maybe many other dimensions, but it begins with a Luke. That's why the next verse in the Sermon on the Mount records Jesus saying, if your right eye causes you to sin, pluck it out.

Of course, he doesn't mean that literally. What he's saying is that so long as my eye lingers, my heart will yearn and not be satisfied until I have what my eye sees.

So you need to begin there and then work backwards to your heart. So the bottom line for those of us who are married is that marriages need work.

They need to be constantly tended. And marriages can go through very tough seasons. And it can be really tough. tough. And there are help available when things are very tough out there and seek it.

[39 : 31] But one of the things that we've got coming up, Matt and Kylie are going to be organised for us, is some marriage refreshment opportunities where we can go for a day or a weekend and sort of, if we're married, to refresh our thinking on these things.

So keep an eye out for them. But I think also for those of us who are single, singleness can be hard. and also needs work as we sort of bring that to the Lord and think, how do I live this life with

integrity before you?

You, the one Lord, who were also single and lived a full life before the Lord. Then there's the eighth word. Verse 15, you shall not steal.

Many of the commandments are in the negative form, but they imply a positive, don't they? So here it's no stealing, whether that's from the government, incorrect tax submission, not from work, not working contracted hours.

Stealing time and money or over generous in inheritance distribution to ourself, if we're the executor, rather than to the others who are also benefiting from it. Stealing from elderly or vulnerable relatives, stealing from the Lord, holding back on giving to the kingdom and so on.

[40 : 38] But that's the negative, but the positive, it implies generosity, doesn't it? When money or things are not an idol, when we've dealt with those earlier commandments in our lives, when these things are not an idol and our hearts, then it reshapes our understanding of what we've been given.

It begins to reorder these words that bring life and refreshment that set us free, begin to reshape our hearts, renew our priorities, enlarge our loves, such that we are able to freely give as freely we have received.

Then the ninth word, verse 16. You shall not give false testimony against the neighbor. In other words, do not lie. And I think reflecting on society, as a society, as we've walked away from the Lord, there's been a tendency to trivialize and undermine this, I think.

In a universe without God, there are no sins. Live life according to your own rules. Lie is only wrong if you think it's wrong. So telling lies or white lies, they just roll off the tongue without a twinge of conscience.

And it weakens, I think, the fabric of our society. It destroys trust. But the problem is that when lying or deception becomes just part of who we are, how do we know when we're not lying and deceiving ourselves?

[42 : 04] And the level of self deception is only sometimes realized when our world comes crashing around us. we've deceived ourselves about how much we're drinking. And we turn up drunk at work.

And our colleagues can no longer turn a blind eye and we're exposed. We've been, we've spent so long, we've become so used to lying that we're actually lying to ourselves.

Deceiving ourselves. Or creative cranking at work, lying to ourselves about paying back what we've maybe stolen from the workplace. See, the thing is, with all of these things, what they encourage us to do is to keep short accounts in these areas.

Because when we are young, and not just when we are young, but particularly when we are young, if we are just one degree off on these things, without keeping short accounts, 20 years down the line, we find ourselves way off.

It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. And here's where how freedom is to be found. Verse 10, the 10th word.

[43 : 11] Verse 17, do not covet. Coveting is the longing to have what others have and you do not. Left unchecked, it creates ever deepening dissatisfaction, invites others to the pity party that is in our souls of bitterness and anger and jealousy and resentment and fantasizing.

Oh, if only I had what my neighbor or my friends or my colleagues had, their house and their land, I'd be happy. If only I was married to their spouse, I'd be happy. Or if only I had their staffing, their stocks, their jobs, their business, then I'd be happy.

And the Lord here in his wisdom says, loved ones, don't go to these places. Embrace, rejoice in, delight in the opposite direction.

Finding your satisfaction, your contentment principally in the Lord. See, these are 10 words, they're beautiful words that are given that help to define not a small sheep pen, but they help define the shores of the great ocean of liberty that we're born again into and the new life that Christ has given us as we seek to follow him.

But I guess the question is that this morning, if we're not using these words and the words of Christ to govern our lives, what 10 words, if you like, are we using to govern our lives? Are they adequate to bring life and liberty or are they just going to lead us into misery ultimately?

[44 : 40] But I guess when we look at these things and think, you know, our hearts can feel somewhat weak. We know our Achilles heels and think, how are we supposed to live in the liberty and the light of these things?

Well, Paul nails it for us. 1 Corinthians 1.24. He says, Christ, Christ and in all that he brings to us, all the benefits of the salvation that is now ours in him.

He is the power and the wisdom of God's. Yes, these are 10 simple words and we're trying to work out in the complicated situations of our lives and think, I don't have the wisdom for it. But Christ is the wisdom of God for us as we walk with him, as we draw near to him, as we keep close to him, as we learn his words and his ways, we will discover the wisdom of these things and the greater wisdom that stems from life with him.

And Peter also affirms it to us in 2 Peter 1.3. Look it up if you want. Where he says, his divine power, Christ's divine power has given everything we need for a godly life through our knowledge of him and his word and his ways.

He has called us for his own glory and goodness. Through these, he has given us his very great and precious promises so that through them we may participate in the divine nature.

[46:04] Having escaped the corruption in the world caused by evil desires. He goes on to say, for this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness and to goodness knowledge, and that's a relational knowledge, love for God, love for neighbor and the way that these things work out.

And to knowledge self-control and to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness, to godliness mutual affection, love one for the other. And to mutual affection, love. For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge, that relationship with the Lord.

But whoever does not have them is nearsighted and blind, forgetting that they have been cleansed in their past sins. See that contentment in which we are invited into through these Ten Commandments and the rest of Scripture is find as we treasure Christ above all else.

We have no other gods before him. See, we will transgress the other commandments only by transgressing those first ones. So James, hear the encouragement of James.

James 4 verse 8. Draw at the beginning of this year, determine in our hearts with the help of the Holy Spirit to draw near to God. And what is the promise associated with that?

[47:29] And he will draw near to you. What greater word, invitation and promise do we need to hear at the beginning of the year?

As we look at, yes, the Ten Commandments, as we realize their place in our lives before we come to Christ, convict and condemn, after we come to Christ to help cultivate the new life that we're called to enjoy, the freedom for which he has set us free.

In this new chapter, this new season, this new year. Let's seek him. That we might enjoy the freedom of which he has set us free.

Let's pray. God, our Father, thank you for your word. Thank you that it is living, that it is active, that every single page whispers your name, points us to you and to the life and liberty and goodness and kindness that you've called us into.

Lord, we pray that you would help us as we've rushed through these things to ponder them in our hearts this week, to savor them and let them lead us closer to you as we yield our lives to you, as we surrender our idols, as we lift, in a sense, the sword of our lives to you and say, Master, command me.

[48:46] Lord, lead me. Lord, more of you in my life. Lord, would you help me to know your presence continually, rejoicing in all the benefits that are now mine in Christ Jesus.

We ask it in Jesus' precious name. Amen. Amen.