

# (Exodus) Exodus 20:1-2

by J. Vernon McGee

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*The law of God is a moral code that reveals God's standards and requires perfect obedience, but it is separate from grace, which reveals God's love and brings man to Christ.*

**Duration:** 11:26

**Scripture:** Exodus 20:1

**Topics:** "Expositional"

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## Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of following God's law. He argues that lying, stealing, and adultery are wrong simply because God says they are wrong, not for any other reason. The preacher highlights the fact that humanity is unable to keep God's law, as evidenced by the presence of jails and locks on doors. He also emphasizes that the law serves as a mirror, revealing mankind's inability to bridge the gap between themselves and God's standard. The sermon concludes with a cautionary tale about a man who disregarded the Ten Commandments and faced the consequences in his life and death.

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## Transcript

Now, the first that's given are the Ten Commandments. This is a moral code, and let me just begin reading. And God spake all these words, saying, I am the Lord which hath brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.

Now, on the basis of that, God says, I want now to give you my law. You've asked for it, and this is the basis now that I want to put you on. And He gives here, first of all, these Ten Commandments.

Now, I can't go into a great deal of detail today, but we can mention certain things, and especially in this day when we're told we have a new morality. Well, the new morality goes back before the giving of the Ten Commandments, and it was not even new then. It came right out of the Garden of Eden when man disobeyed God.

It was before the flood, and it was after the flood, and it's not new. At this age, we love to think we're sophisticated and refined sinners. We're not.

We're just crude sinners in the raw, natural sentence. And this now puts before us God's standards. And no man can play fast and loose with the Ten Commandments and get by with it.

I don't care who he is. He doesn't get by with it at all. Now, there was a graveyard for criminals on Blackwell's Island, and on one of these graves, there was this marker and these words, Here lies the fragments of John Smith, who contradicted his maker, played football with the Ten Commandments, and departed this life at the age of 35.

His mother and wife weep for him. Nobody else does. May he rest in peace.

Well, that is something that reveals that here is a man that tried to defy the law of God, but nobody can play football with the Ten Commandments and escape the punishment of God. Oftentimes, the charge is made against those of us who preach the grace of God that we do not have a proper appreciation for the law, that we actually despise it. We reject it and actually teach, because we are not saved by law, that we can violate it at will, break it with impunity.

Well, may I say to you that that's not true at all. On the contrary, every preacher, the grace of God, who has a true perspective of the nature of salvation by faith, realized likewise the lofty character of the law. And Paul's answered that for us.

Shall we continue in sin, and that's because we've been saved by grace? The answer is, God forbid, or let it not be. It cannot be. If you think you can continue to live in sin and break with impunity the Ten Commandments at will, then, my friend, you're not saved by the grace of God, because when you're saved by the grace of God, you'll want to please God.

You'll want to do His will, and the Ten Commandments certainly reveal the will of God. And therefore, today, I think every preacher of the grace of God has a respect and reverence for it. The psalmist says, Well, what is the law? Someone has defined it as the transcript of the mind of God.

Well, that's a very defective definition. The law is the expression of the mind of God relative to what man ought to be, his will for man and his nature and character. But there's no grace or mercy in the law at all.

The law made it very clear. It's an expression of the holy will of God. And the psalmist says in Psalm 19 that the law is perfect.

That means it requires perfection on your part. And believe me, I've never met one yet that measured up to it. It's not some vague notion.

It doesn't have anything to do with good intentions. It requires perfect obedience. The law is perfect, and then it's right.

And that means that our notions of right and wrong are colored by our environment and by the fact we have a fallen nature. Now, the law is a revelation of God, and God has drawn the line between right and wrong. How do you know what's right? Well, because God says it, friends.

That right now is the question that's being asked by this generation that wants freedom. They say, why is it wrong to steal? They don't mind stealing, and yet they're using the one thou shalt not murder. Boy, how inconsistent this crowd is, and how ignorant they are of the law.

Why is it wrong to lie or to steal? Because God says it's wrong. No other reason, friend. I see no reason for that.

Oh, you say, well, it's for the good of mankind. You bet it's for the good of mankind, because anything God wants is for the good of mankind. And to keep it, well, it'd be a wonderful thing if man could keep it.

But man doesn't keep it, and the jails, and the locks on the doors, and the fact that you have to sign about ten times a day when you go to a bank to borrow money. Why? Because they don't trust you, friends. There was a day when it was said, a man's good is his bond.

That's not true today. We find, therefore, that the law is an expression, and it is a norm for human conduct, right and wrong. And stealing's wrong, because God says it's wrong.

Lying is wrong, because God says it's wrong. Adultery is wrong, because God says it's wrong. And then the law never enforces itself.

The lawgiver must have power. And therefore, you'll find that the laws of God's nature, they really enforce themselves with a tremendous impact. Take the law of gravitation, for instance.

You can go up as high as you want to go, but you better not turn loose. And that law of gravitation is in operation. You can't break it.

You may think you can. A great many people think they can break the Ten Commandments, live by the new morality today, and get by with it. Reminds me of that whimsical story of the man who jumped off the Empire State Building in New York City.

When he went by the 50th floor, a man looked out the window and saw him. He says, well, how is it? Well, he says, so far, it's so good. May I say to you, that's not where the law of gravitation enforces itself.

Fifty more floors down, the man will find out, so far, not so good. The interesting thing is that the laws must be enforced to be a law. And therefore, God says, the soul that sinneth, it shall die.

There must be the enforcement. There must be the penalty. Now, there's another prevalent viewpoint concerning law that needs to be corrected.

And that's confounding law and grace. Confusing them into one system, and that's confusion confounded. The law is robbed of its majesty and meaning when you try to think you can play fast and loose with it.

And there's no love in law. There's no grace in law. Grace is robbed of its goodness, its glow and glory, when it's mixed with law.

It's robbed of its wonder and worthwhileness, its attractiveness and its desire. The claims of law are unanswered, and the sinner's needs not met when they're brought together. The law sets forth what man ought to be, and grace sets forth what God is.

And the majesty of the law is something that we do need to recognize. Now, the law reveals, therefore, who God is, and how vast the gap and the yawning chasm is between God and man. Paul asked the question, Tell me ye that desire to be under the law, do you not hear the law? Well, you better listen to it, because man's been weighed in the balances by the Ten Commandments and found wanting.

And you don't measure yourself by others. It's very easy for the man on Mount Whitney to look down at the man on the ant hill and say, I'm higher than you are. But the man on Mount Whitney didn't make it to the moon.

And he didn't make it to heaven either. You don't measure up to God's standard. Now, the law reveals who man is and his inability to bridge that gap.

Now we know that what things, soever the law, it saith to them that are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped, and the whole world become guilty before God. And Paul says in Romans 8, 3, what the law could not do. It's not the fault with the law, but there's a great fault with us.

The law is a mirror, as we've seen. And we're told don't be a hearer of the word, but a doer, because it's like a man looking at himself in the mirror. And that's all a great many people who talk about the law do.

They look at themselves, they look at the mirror, and they think that they are all right. And they remind me of that fairy story years ago of this ugly queen. I think she was a queen.

And she'd look at the mirror and she'd say, Mirror, mirror on the wall, who's the fairest of them all? And she wanted the mirror to say that she was, but the mirror told the truth and said she wasn't. It was someone else. And the interesting thing is a great many folk look at the mirror today, or the word of God or the Ten Commandments, and they do the same thing.

They say, Mirror, mirror on the wall, who's the fairest of them all? And the only difference is they say, well, I am. They think they keep it. My friend, you need to get a little different perspective of yourself there.

Now, the law never made a man a sinner, just revealed that he was a sinner. And the law was given to bring a man to Christ, as we've seen. It was our schoolmaster, our pedagogist, to take us by the hand, bring us to the cross, and say to us, little man, you need a Savior because you're a sinner.

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