

DEUTERONOMY 5

THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

As Moses prepared to give his next discourse, he called together all the people and commanded the attention of his audience. When we hear the Word of God, we must learn it; and what we have learned, we must put in practice – for that is the whole purpose of hearing and learning. It is not to fill our heads with notions, nor our mouths with talk; but to direct our affections and our way of life.

Moses reminded the people of the Covenant that the Lord made with them at Horeb (another name for Mount Sinai). This Covenant was what they were to govern themselves by. See the wonderful condescension of Divine grace, in turning His commands into a Covenant, so that we might be more strongly bound to obedience by our own consent, and more encouraged in it by the Divine promise – both of which are in the Covenant. This Covenant was made between God and His people; but Moses acted as the Mediator of this Covenant, between God and man. Herein he was a picture of the only Mediator between God and humans – the Man Christ Jesus! (1 Tim. 2:5)

After reminding the people of this Covenant, Moses went on to repeat the words which the Lord had audibly spoken in their hearing, on that memorable day at Mount Sinai. These words were what we call the Ten Commandments. There is some slight variation between the record of the Commandments in Exodus 20 and the record that we have in this chapter (just as there is slight variation between the Lord's Prayer as it is recorded in Matthew 6 and in Luke 11). This is to teach us to be sure that we focus on the meaning that is conveyed in the words, rather than merely "worshipping" the words themselves. The greatest example of variation between the two records is found in the fourth commandment. In Exodus 20, the reason for the observance of the Sabbath was taken from the creation of the world; but here in this chapter, it is taken from the Israelites' deliverance out of Egypt, because that was a foreshadowing of our redemption by Jesus – in remembrance of which, the Christian Lord's Day is to be observed. In the resurrection of Christ, we were brought into the glorious liberty of the children of God, by His mighty hand and outstretched arm. Therefore, under the Gospel, we are directed to observe the first day of the week as the Lord's Day, in remembrance of that glorious work of power and grace!

The Lord wrote these Commandments upon two tables of stone, so that they would be preserved from corruption; and also so that they would be transmitted, pure and entire, to the people's descendants – for whose use they were intended, as well as for our present generation.

Outline of the chapter:

- ❖ *Moses reminds the people of God's Covenant with them at Mt. Sinai – verses 1-5*
- ❖ *He rehearses the Ten Commandments that the Lord gave to them – verses 6-21*
- ❖ *He reminds them of their reaction and their request, after God had spoken these Commandments in their hearing – verses 22-33*

Moses reminded the people of the great consternation that they were put into by the extreme terror with which these Ten Commandments were given – by the audible voice of God Himself speaking to them out of the midst of fire and clouds and great darkness! They acknowledged that they could not bear it anymore. God’s appearances have always been terrible to Man, ever since the Fall; but Jesus – having taken away sin – invites us to come boldly to the throne of grace! How sweet it is to a soul that is truly distressed under the terrors of the broken law, to hear the mild and soul-reviving language of Christ’s Gospel of peace!

The Israelites no longer wanted to hear God’s audible voice speaking to them; so they requested Moses to listen to the words of the Lord, and then convey them to them. And they promised that they would hear what Moses said, as if they had heard it from God Himself, and that they would obey his words.

God commended the people’s request. Their acknowledgement of the necessity of a mediator between God and themselves, their desire to still receive further directions from God through Moses, and their promise to observe these directions – all of this was well-spoken (verse 28). The Lord expressed His wish (verse 29) that the people would always have such a heart as they now seemed to have – a heart to fear Him, and to keep His commandments forever! By this, we see that He truly desires the well-being and salvation of poor sinners. He has given us abundant proof that He does, for He gives us time and space to repent in. He has sent His Son to redeem us, He has promised His Spirit to those who pray for that privilege, and He has declared that He has no pleasure in the ruin of sinners.

In light of this new arrangement, the Lord charged the people to observe and do all that He had commanded them (verses 32, 33). Seeing that He had shown Himself so tender of them, and so willing to consider their weakness and gratify them in what they desired; and seeing that they had promised so solemnly, and under the influence of so many good causes and considerations, to hear and obey – the Lord then charged them to walk in all the ways that He had commanded them, assuring them that it would be highly advantageous for them to do so. The only way to be truly happy is to be holy. The Lord says to the righteous, “It shall be well with them” (Isa. 3:10). May believers make it more and more their study and delight to do as the Lord has commanded!

Lord, give us grace to receive Your precious Word, and to cry out with the Psalmist, “Oh! how I love thy law! it is my meditation all the day!” Blessed Jesus! May we receive the law of faith, which is not obeyed by works of righteousness which we have done or can do! We thank You that we are justified by Your perfect blood and righteousness, for we never could have been made righteous by fulfilling all the demands of the law of Moses. Amen.

