



EXPLORING GOD'S LOVE THROUGH THE BIBLE: EXODUS PT 3 LOVE THAT GAVE THE LAW

JULY 31, 2016

EXHORTATION CONCERNING GOD'S LOVE

In keeping with our subject today, may these verses bless you in the love of our God!

*Know therefore that the LORD your God is God, the faithful God who keeps covenant and steadfast love with those who love him and keep his commandments, to a thousand generations, and repays to their face those who hate him, by destroying them. He will not be slack with one who hates him. He will repay him to his face. You shall therefore be careful to do the commandment and the statutes and the rules that I command you today. **And because you listen to these rules and keep and do them, the LORD your God will keep with you the covenant and the steadfast love that he swore to your fathers. He will love you, bless you, and multiply you.** He will also bless the fruit of your womb and the fruit of your ground, your grain and your wine and your oil, the increase of your herds and the young of your flock, in the land that he swore to your fathers to give you. (Deut 7:9-13)*

***If you love me, you will keep my commandments.** And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you. "I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. Yet a little while and the world will see me no more, but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live. In that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you. **Whoever has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me. And he who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and manifest myself to him.** (Jn 14:15-21)*

TODAY'S TEXT: EXODUS 19

1. When last we were in Exodus, we saw the great mercy of the Lord in delivering Israel from Egypt with a mighty hand and outstretched arm!
2. In Exodus 14, God allowed them to cross the Red Sea (with the Egyptians in pursuit) on dry ground. He went on to close the sea on Israel's enemies!
3. As they set out from the Red Sea, they had no water. God, in love and mercy, turned bitter waters into sweet (Ex 15:22-27)! He showed Himself to be Jehovah-Rapha, our **healer!**
4. When His precious people became hungry, God, in love and mercy, "rained bread from heaven" on them, and continued feeding them with manna until they began to eat the fruit of Canaan at the first Passover in the promised land (Ex 16; Josh 5:10-12)!!
5. It's sad that in both the above examples, prior to God's merciful provision, the people **grumbled** (Ex 15:25, 16:2). *What a loving God, who blesses His people despite bad attitudes and faithlessness!!*
6. Despite continued grumbling and quarreling (Ex 17:2), God continued to provide water (Ex 17:6) and even gave them victory over their enemies when they were attacked (Ex 17:8-16).

After the victory, Moses built an altar to the Lord and described Him as Jehovah-Nissi: “The Lord is my **Banner**.”

7. So we can see God’s desire to teach His people about Himself (Healer and Banner) as they journeyed. Remember our lesson from James 4:5: **God wants His people to know Him, and incredibly, He yearns to be close to us too!** This is so clear in Exodus.
8. Due to this desire, in my honest opinion, God planned a meeting between Himself and His people....an intimate and holy meeting at Mount Sinai. He told them:
 - “I bore you on eagle’s wings and brought you to myself.” (v4)
 - “Now therefore, if you will indeed obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession among all peoples, for all the earth is mine; and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. These are the words that you shall speak to the people of Israel.” (v5-6)
 - “Consecrate yourselves and wash your garments.” (v10)
 - “Be ready;” “The Lord will come down on Mount Sinai.” (v11)
9. God wanted to meet with His people, and He did...wrapped in smoke and fire, thunder and a trumpet blast! He descended upon the mountain, in the sight of the people, spoke to Moses, and gave him His Holy Law.

GOD’S LOVE ON MOUNT SINAI: THE GIVING OF THE LAW (EX 20)

- I. You shall have no other gods before me.
- II. You shall not make for yourself a carved image.
- III. You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain.
- IV. Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.
- V. Honor your father and your mother.
- VI. You shall not murder.
- VII. You shall not commit adultery.
- VIII. You shall not steal.
- IX. You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.
- X. You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or his male servant, or his female servant, or his ox, or his donkey, or anything that is your neighbor's."

We should love the Law! (c.f. *The Playbook Chapter 4*)

Our attitude should be like the Psalmist:

Oh how I love your law! It is my meditation all the day. Your commandment makes me wiser than my enemies, for it is ever with me. I have more understanding than all my teachers, for your testimonies are my meditation. I understand more than the aged, for I keep your precepts. I hold back my feet from every evil way, in order to keep your word. I do not turn aside from your rules, for you have taught me. How sweet

are your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth! Through your precepts I get understanding; therefore I hate every false way. Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path. (Ps 119:97-105)

- The Law cannot save us (we are saved by grace through faith! Eph 2:8), but it is still important.
- Question 42 of the Westminster Shorter Catechism says, “*What is the essence of the Ten Commandments?*” The answer is, “*The essence of the Ten Commandments is to love the Lord our God with all our heart, with all our soul, with all our strength, and with all our mind, and to love everyone else as we love ourselves.*”
- In other words, the moral laws of God are worship instructions! They are not just the standards by which man will be judged (Jam 2:10-12), they are a foundational blueprint by which God is loved!
- **God loves us and shows us how to love Him in return!**

Because of His great love, God gave His Law. It does so many wonderful things for His people:

1. It reveals His holy **character!**

- The Law lifts up *holiness*. Yes, God is merciful and loving. We see this beautifully revealed in many places, culminating in the life, ministry, death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ our Lord!
- But the Law highlights a significant part of the God we serve: His uncompromising **purity**. It’s as if God, in mercy, said, “Let me show you my children, more of who I Am.”
- Hence the need to “consecrate” and “set limits around the mountain” (vv22-23).
- The Law literally reminds us all: “*Sanctify yourselves therefore, and be ye holy: for I am the LORD your God. And ye shall keep my statutes, and do them: I am the LORD which sanctify you. (Lev 20:7-8)*

2. It promotes the **Fear** of the **Lord!**

- This very important part of the Christian life and character has been lost. Oh, how we need to recover it!
- “*The fear of the Lord is the love, reverence, awe and passion that prompts the believer to obey God. It is that state of mental and emotional sanctification where the believer sees God as holy and a reverent trembling results. It is the necessary characteristic of Christian discipleship where total obedience to the commands of Christ is seen as a loving response to a loving God.*” (The Playbook p.86)
- After the Law was given, this was the response:

Now when all the people saw the thunder and the flashes of lightning and the sound of the trumpet and the mountain smoking, the people were afraid and trembled, and they stood far off and said to Moses, “You speak to us, and we will listen; but do not let God speak to us, lest we die.” Moses said to the people, “Do not fear, for God has come to test you, that the fear of him may be before you, that you may not sin.” (Ex 20:18-20)

- As crazy as this sounds, I submit we need a touch more of this mindset! No, not fear of hell or damnation (because we are Christians), but a reverent **trembling** when God speaks to us!!!
 - God declares, *“this is the one to whom I will look: he who is humble and contrite in spirit and trembles at my word.”* (Isa 66:2b)
3. It reveals **sin!**
- *What then shall we say? That the law is sin? By no means! Yet if it had not been for the law, I would not have known sin. For I would not have known what it is to covet if the law had not said, “You shall not covet.”* (Rom 7:7 ESV)
 - *Everyone who makes a practice of sinning also practices lawlessness; sin is lawlessness.* (1Jn 3:4 ESV)
 - *“Now we know that the law is good, if one uses it lawfully, (9) understanding this, that the law is not laid down for the just but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and sinners, for the unholy and profane, for those who strike their fathers and mothers, for murderers, (10) the sexually immoral, men who practice homosexuality, enslavers, liars, perjurers, and whatever else is contrary to sound doctrine, (11) in accordance with the gospel of the glory of the blessed God with which I have been entrusted.”* (1Ti 1:8-11 ESV)
4. It reveals sin from God’s **perspective**: as “sinful without measure.” Speaking about the Law, Paul writes:
- *Did that which is good, then, bring death to me? By no means! It was sin, producing death in me through what is good, in order that sin might be shown to be sin, and through the commandment might become sinful beyond measure.* (Rom 7:13 ESV)
 - I pray you see this as a loving thing! God, in MERCY and forbearance, uses His Law to convict us...break us down...annihilate our **pride**...and show us our NEED for Christ by showing us how sinful our sin is!
5. Lastly, the Law points us to **Christ**...

PREACHING CHRIST IN THE TEXT:

For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes. (Rom 10:4)

But the Scripture imprisoned everything under sin, so that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe. Now before faith came, we were held captive under the law, imprisoned until the coming faith would be revealed. So then, the law was our guardian until Christ came, in order that we might be justified by faith. (Gal 3:22-24)

- The Law was our guardian. Literally, the word in Greek in this context means “one who guards, shuts in, or keeps in a ward” or cell. In this context, the word guardian is appropriate because it speaks to the duties of a prison guard! The word in the KJV is *schoolmaster*; a head disciplinarian!
- When the Law does its holy work, we cry out to Jesus! From the “cell” of sin, we cry out to Jesus for pardon! Only from that prison cell can we be truly grateful for the grace and mercy of God. Only from death row can we understand our plight and beg for mercy. Only from this mindset can true repentance happen and we can be reborn into a new life!

Yes...the giving of the Law...so often thought of as mean and wrathful, **was a great act of love given by a God who loves His people.** Sadly, even today, we view much of God’s Word with the “side eye,” playing love and law, or grace and truth off one another. The truth is, they are both true. :) God has rules, and yet is loving. He requires us to follow His rules, yet grants us mercy when we fail. He is so serious about His Law that Jesus had to suffer and die to pay the penalty for our lawlessness. He is so serious about loving us that Jesus’ sacrifice is laid to our account by faith!

Thank you, Lord, for your Holy Law!

Amen.