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The Laws of Love, Part 2

Deuteronomy 5:1-7

And Moses summoned all Israel and said to them, "Hear, O Israel, the statutes and the rules that I speak in your hearing today, and you shall learn them and be careful to do them. The Lord our God made a covenant with us in Horeb. Not with our fathers did the Lord make this covenant, but with us, who are all of us here alive today. The Lord spoke with you face to face at the mountain, out of the midst of the fire, while I stood between the Lord and you at that time, to declare to you the word of the Lord. For you were afraid because of the fire, and you did not go up into the mountain. He said:

"I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. You shall have no other gods before me."

God in human history called an individual named Abraham to Himself to become the father of nations, and He started a unique family for Himself here on the earth known as the Israelite family. And through Abraham and the seed of Abraham, He led him from the east to the west, over near Israel in the Promised Land. But a famine had His people enslaved in Egypt for nearly 400 years, until God stirred up in the heart of a man named Moses the passion to go help set His people free from the slavery and oppression of Egypt.

And Moses, under the power of God in the heart of God, brought the people out of slavery into freedom. God is pro-freedom, pro-responsibility, pro-dependence on Him. He brought them out into the desert. Just after they got out of Egypt, through the Red Sea, into the desert, Moses was called up on Mount Horeb. In grace and mercy, God began to give us further instruction on how to flourish in life.

As they were learning His ways in the desert, before they went some 40 years later into the Promised Land, Moses took time to remind them of these instructions. We read that in our lesson today, where Moses said, "When I went up on the mountain to receive the tablets of stone, the tablets of the covenant that the Lord had made with us, I stayed on the mountain 40 days and 40 nights. I ate no bread and drank no water.

And the Lord gave me two stone tablets inscribed by His finger. On them were all the commandments of the Lord proclaimed to us on the mountain of the fire on the day of assembly.” This is what we refer to as the Ten Commandments, the law of love.

Now, our gospel reading today: Jesus divides all of God's law into two categories. When we look at them, we see how that is very true. When Jesus was attempting to be tricked, He was asked, “Which is the greatest commandment?” And Jesus said, “The greatest commandment, the first commandment, is the commandment built on all four of these laws: You should love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength”—the first four of the ten.

Then He said, “The second is like it,” and the second six, the final six of the ten, hang on the second commandment: how we should love our neighbor as ourselves. So these are all encompassed in the laws of love. These are how we love God better and how we love our neighbor better.

And so God gives these instructions, and He tells us this is His way for human flourishing. Now, these Ten Commandments are an in-depth look at God's instruction for us. The first commandment simply says this. The challenge with it is that people feel it as a religious instruction, not an invitation to life. But it's an invitation into the fullness of life for human beings.

The first command God gave us is very simple: You should have no other gods before Me. It's been stated in many other ways. We should put God first. We should choose the living God first. Seek Him above all else. Revere Him. Then we ask, why is this loving? I will just offer you three abbreviated reasons—three biblical revelations.

This is loving: for us to put God first in life because He is the source of life. Romans 11:36 says, “From Him and to Him and through Him are all things.” We've mentioned already James 1:17: “Every good and perfect gift comes down to us from the Father of heavenly lights.” He is the source of all things.

I have friends who don't ever mention God. They simply... And it's a new, modern idea to say “source.” But when they say, “I worship source,” what they're saying is, “I worship God.” They just don't know it. God is the beginning and the end. All of creation is an overflow of who He is. From Him, to Him, and through Him are all things. Evil is a distortion of His creation, a rebellion of free will. But all of life, all that is good, everything that happens, everything that you and I experience comes from Him. It's a gift of the Almighty. He is the source of all things. Knowing He is the source, He invites us to put Him first.

Secondly, we see not just everything that exists, but His riches, wisdom, and knowledge are beyond human comprehension. Romans 11:33–34: The apostle Paul, under the Spirit, pens these words: “Oh, the depth and the riches and the wisdom and the knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and His paths beyond tracing out! Who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been His counselor?”

The Bible tells us that the wisdom of God makes the wisdom of man like foolishness before Him. To trust in humanity, in the progress of humanity, and in the intelligence of humanity is hubris. We come from a Creator of whom we cannot comprehend, whose very nature is love. When He comes to us and

says, “Put Me first,” He's doing it because He loves us, and He has a great passion for us to flourish and come alive in Him—to not walk around in a spiritual stupor and a spiritual numbness, but to be stirred by the power of God.

Daniel said, “Those who know their God and put Him first will be strong and do exploits. They will have courage and move into the world under the inspiration of the Spirit, even unto their own lives.” And friends, we have seen that this week in our country. We have seen it—people who will sell out their lives for the truth. And this comes from a life that's found in God, only in God.

Yesterday, Mike and I buried a lady, 102 years old. 102 years old. Her entire life—her entire life—she prayed for God to release His power in our world. When God comes to us and says, “You shall have no other gods before Me,” He's doing it because He loves us. He loves us. He cares about us. He's the source of life. His riches, wisdom, and knowledge are beyond human comprehension. And He knows this on a very deep, personal level. Our souls long for Him and can only be satisfied by Him.

David demonstrates this for us when, in a very honest moment before God, he penned the words of Psalm 42: “As a deer pants for water”—have you ever seen an animal thirsty, panting? Friends, the Bible says the whole world is groaning, panting, longing—not for more human ingenuity, but for God, for God.

“As a deer pants for water, so my soul pants for You, O God.” Where is the insanity of our world coming from? It's coming from a restlessness outside of God. “My soul thirsts for God,” he says, “for the living God. When can I go and meet with Him?”

God is very loving in telling us to put Him first, because He's the source of all things. He's unsearchable. His riches surpass worldly riches, beyond our human comprehension. And He designed us with a deep, empty place in our souls that can only be filled by Him.

And He knows this. So He says, put Me first. Choose Me first. Seek Me first. Revere Me above all.

I just ask this morning: what is the evidence in your life that He's first? I want to commend you. For one thing, you showed up here this morning. That's a sign of putting God first in your life. It has been down through history: attendance of faith fellowship gatherings is a sign of prioritizing God in our lives.

But if we were to take the rest of your schedule in the week, would there be evidence that you are putting God first in your life? Is there evidence of you reading His revelation as a part of your life? Is there evidence of you scheduling out time to talk with Him in your life? Is there evidence of you gathering with others through the course of a week to be in fellowship, putting Him first?

What if we were to open your checkbook and look at how you're spending your money? Would we find evidence there that you're putting God first? I know many of you, over the years, have, because it's the stewardship of places like this that keep going—because people decide to put God first, not only in their prayer life and personal life, but in their physical life, in their financial life.

But what would be the other evidence that you're putting God first? By your attitude when you show up at the store, how you operate at restaurants, how you're operating in your business, and the integrity with which you're operating with things.

And if you're being honest with yourself, I bet you, like me, would say, “Ah, God, I've broken Your law. I have fallen short of Your intent, and I need to apologize. I need to repent. I need to say I'm sorry.”

This is a part of God's law: to expose us to the beauty, wonder, and marvel of the nature of God, so that we can see that we fall short of His intent for us, and we can cry out for mercy and find mercy at the cross. God demonstrated His love for us, and while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

If you're here this morning and you sense that you've broken God's first law, understand: the judgment for breaking God's law is death. But He has given us mercy in Jesus. And if you've never opened your heart to the gift of Jesus, why not this morning? Why not right now? Our world needs more people who are empowered by the Spirit of Christ, forgiven and set free, and want to walk in the courage and the faith of people like the one whom we saw shot earlier this week.

If this is you and you're sensing this, the Bible says that you and I can bear spiritual fruit in the world by keeping with repentance, having godly sorrow, confessing our sins, and turning away from them. And God will continue to bear fruit through us.

To this end, let's pray together.

Father, we thank You for the opportunity to gather here this morning. We thank You for Your love—pulsating love from eternity to eternity—creating us and putting us here on the earth, for giving us a world filled with beauty to live on.

We apologize for our sinfulness and our rebellion against You, for how dirty we have made it, how violent we have made it. Have mercy on us, Father, as a nation, as a people. Have mercy on us as a world. And in Your kindness—we know it's through Your kindness—draw us back to Yourself by the power of Your Spirit, that we may come to understand that life is found only in You.

Seize our hearts, Father. Bind our wandering hearts to You, so that we could give more and more full allegiance to the work of Your Spirit in our lives. Do this for Your church in the world. Strengthen Your church, Father—the ecclesia, the called-out ones. Point out our cowardice and stir us to courage. Father, we need Your help in this.

Thank You for this time together. Thank You for ministering to us and caring about us. And now, as we close out our time together in song, Father, be pleased with the fruit of our lips, as our hearts, through true confession, are sprinkled by the blood of Your Son Jesus.

We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.