

Hearing Gods Grace: God's Good Law

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[0 : 0 0] In verse 1, Moses summoned all Israel and said, Hear, O Israel, the decrees and the laws I declare in your hearing today. Learn them and be sure to follow them.

The Lord our God made a covenant with us at Horeb. It was not with our fathers that the Lord made this covenant, but with us, with all of us who are alive here today. The Lord spoke to you face to face out of the fire on the mountain.

And at that time I stood between the Lord and you to declare to you the word of the Lord, because you were afraid of the fire and did not go up to the mountain. And he said, I am the Lord your God who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery.

You shall have no gods before me. You shall not make for yourself an idol 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 fathers 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.

[1 : 1 1] You shall not misuse the name of the Lord your God, for the Lord will not hold anyone guiltless who misuses his name. Observe the Sabbath day by keeping it holy as the Lord your God has commanded you.

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 manservant or maidservant, nor your ox, your donkey or any of your animals, nor the alien within your gates, so that your manservant and maidservant may rest as you do.

Remember that you were slaves in Egypt and that the Lord your God brought you out of there with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm. Therefore, the Lord your God has commanded you to observe the Sabbath.

Honor your father and your mother as the Lord your God has commanded you, so that you may live long and that it may go well with you in the land your God has given you.

You shall not murder. You shall not commit adultery. You shall not steal. You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor. And you shall not covet your neighbor's wife.

[2 : 2 1] You shall not set your desire on your neighbor's house or land, his manservant or maidservant, his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor. These are the commands the Lord proclaimed in a loud voice to you, to your whole assembly there on the mountain from out of the fire, the cloud and the deep darkness.

And he added nothing more than he wrote them on two stone tablets and gave them to me. Okay. Thanks, Johnny. Thanks, Johnny. Thanks, Johnny.

Thanks, Johnny. Thanks, Johnny. Thanks, Johnny. Thanks, Johnny. Thanks, Johnny. Thanks, Johnny.

Thanks, Johnny. Concern for those who've been asking how we are. We're doing all right. It's a case of 60-40 at this stage rather than 40-60, if you can work that out, doing better and on the mend.

So thank you. But keep praying for me as I preach. I have water, but I need God's strength. So keep your Bibles open, please, to Deuteronomy.

[3 : 57] Well, we're going to look a little bit at chapter 4 as well, just briefly, and chapters 5 and 6. This is from the body of Jesus.

This is yours. Oh. Sorry, there is another announcement.

Reality at 6, half 6 at Maria's. So, all those involved, see you there. Well, let's pray.

Father God, we thank you so much for your love, your kindness, your goodness expressed in so many different ways. Thank you for your word.

Thank you for your commands, for your laws. And as we look at them together, help us to see what they are to us today. And help us to see what they point us to.

[5 : 20] Encourage us through this morning. And bless us richly. We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen. Well, when I was a kid, I had this, what you might call a love-hate relationship with my parents.

Most of the time, we were getting on great. Fun family times, going on holidays. A mum and a dad who supported me, who cared for me deeply.

But then there were occasions when I would get really angry and annoyed and think they were the worst parents in the world. And you're probably sitting there thinking, hey, you didn't have the worst, I had the worst.

No, you didn't. I'd go up to my room, huffing and puffing. What are they saying? All that sort of thing. And what would get me so worked up was, they would tell me that I couldn't do something that I really wanted to do.

Like, watch telly at half ten at night on school days or something. Or that they would tell me I had to do something that I really didn't want to do. Like, help out my brother or sister.

[6 : 36] You see, I enjoyed their love, but I hated their laws. And in some ways, that's the problem with Deuteronomy.

Because Deuteronomy is all about law. That's what Deuteronomy means. It means a second law, a retelling of God's law. Look at chapter 4, verse 44.

Chapter 4, verse 44. This is the law Moses set before the Israelites. These are the stipulations, decrees, and laws Moses gave them when they came out of Egypt.

Now, who wants to read something like that? Why not talk about good stuff like God's love or God's compassion? Why spoil it all by talking about God's laws?

Why not talk about good stuff like that? Why not talk about good stuff like that? You see, God's law is one of the major stumbling blocks for people to Christianity. People just read something like this and they say, See, it's all about rules and regulations.

[7 : 45] Things you must do and things that you can't do. It's restrictive and oppressive. God is nothing more than a big bully, a ruthless dictator who just makes up rules to spoil our fun and to take away our freedom.

Well, in chapter 5 and 6, we are introduced to God's law. What is well known as the Ten Commandments. But surprisingly, God's love is not opposite to God's law.

Just as my parents, well, they actually did love me and care for me, and they gave me laws because they did love me. Well, so God gives us his law because he cares and loves us.

We're going to look at three big things here in regards to the law. The first one is this. The reason for God's law. God gave his law in the context of a loving covenant.

Look at verse 1 of chapter 5. Moses summoned all Israel and said, Hear, O Israel, the decrees and laws I declare in your hearing today. Learn them and be sure to follow them.

[9 : 09] The Lord our God made a covenant with us at Horeb. That was Mount Sinai. It was not with our fathers that the Lord made this covenant, but with us, with all of us who are alive here today.

You see, like the promises we make in marriage to our spouse, so God's covenant is his promise towards his people.

His passionate, eternal commitment towards his people. A commitment to bless them. A commitment to be with them. A commitment to give them a land.

To save them. To give them life in all its fullness. And because of his promise, God would do what it would take to keep his people.

In fact, God would lay down his life for us. God, who made his commitment to his people, would die for his people to ensure that that relationship would stay for all eternity.

[10 : 13] Now, it's in that context that God gives his law. God is not a dictator. God is not a bully. He is deeply committed to us, his people.

We're given two reasons for his law. First, to remind us of his amazing grace. Look what God says to the people before he even gives a single law.

In verse 6. I am the Lord your God who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery.

I am the God who has graciously rescued you. I delivered you from your chains. I freed you from slavery. This whole theme of grace is picked up again in chapter 6.

Have a look at verse 10 of chapter 6. Verse 10.

[11 : 21] When the Lord your God brings you into the land, he swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, to give you a land with large flourishing cities you did not build, houses filled with all kinds of good things you did not provide, wells you did not dig, and vineyards and olive groves you did not plant.

Then when you eat and are satisfied when you're sitting down in the chair rubbing your full belly, be careful that you do not forget the Lord who bought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery.

You see, the laws were there to remind them, hey guys, listen, everything that you have, where you live, the land that you have, is all been graciously and generously provided to you by God.

Or look down at chapter 6, verse 20. In the future, when your son asks you, Dad, what is the meaning of the stipulations, the decrees and the laws that the Lord our God has commanded us?

Well, tell him, Son, it was like this. We were slaves of Pharaoh in Egypt, but the Lord bought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand. Before our eyes, the Lord sent miraculous signs and wonders, great and terrible, upon Egypt and Pharaoh and his whole household.

[12 : 54] But he bought us out from there to bring us in and give us the land that he promised on oath to our forefathers. You see, the law is there to teach them that grace covers their whole life.

It stretches back into their past, to their rescue from Egypt, and it stretches forward into eternity, to the future, as they get ready to go into the promised land.

So every time we ask the question, why do we have God's law? Why must we obey O God? Well, the answer is simple.

Because God has been incredibly gracious to us. Because God, in our sense, is the one who has rescued us.

He is the one who has freed us from slavery to sin and death. God is the one who has promised us a future, an eternal home in heaven.

[13 : 58] Not because of what you do, but because of who he is. So God gives us his law so that we will never forget, but always remember his amazing grace towards us.

Which brings us to the second reason for the law. To show us how to live in relationship with this God who has rescued us.

Look at the headlines of chapter 5, the Ten Commandments, starting at verse 7. Let's just go through them. Just the headlines. You shall have no other gods before me.

Verse 8. You shall not make for yourself an idol. Verse 11. You shall not misuse the name of the Lord your God. Verse 12. Observe the Sabbath day.

Verse 11. 16. Honor your father and your mother. 17. You shall not murder. You shall not commit adultery. You shall not steal.

[15 : 02] You shall not give false testimony. Verse 21. You shall not covet your neighbor's wife. And you shall not set your desire on your neighbor's possessions.

These Ten Commandments show us how we are to live in relationship with God. The first four, if you look there, all relate to God.

How we should view God. How we should respect God. How we honour God. The last six all relate to other people. How we should live with each other.

How we should treat each other within society. Now while we could make this division and this distinction, we've got to be careful that we don't separate them.

You see, how we love each other is a sign of how we love God. So for example, I can't say, oh I worship God.

[16 : 05] But then at the same time say, I'm sick and fed up of Kirsty. I think I'll have another wife. You can't do that. You can't separate them. Similarly, you can't say, I won't have any other God.

God is my only God. But then at the same time, make work or your family more important than God. Look at chapter 6, verse 4.

Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength.

These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. In other words, to love God God is to take all of his commands to heart and it's to live them all out.

So to show that I do love God with all my heart, strength and soul means loving my neighbour, means loving all those within my community with the commandments that God has given me.

[17 : 22] So God gives us the law so that we will know how to live in relationship with him and with the people that he has put around us.

Now before we move on, I want us to notice the order in which the law came and it's vital that we see this. The rescue from Egypt came first, the relationship in the promised land came second.

Now we've got to get that right. Grace comes first, then comes the law. You see, God did not give them the law first and say, if you obey this law perfectly, if you keep it the way I've given it to you, then I will rescue you and then I will bring you into a new land.

No, God didn't say that. God says, because I have rescued you, because I have delivered you, I give you my law so that you can live in relationship with me.

So the law is given to remind us of God's amazing grace and how we are to live in relationship with God. God's So that's the reason for the law.

[18 : 55] Thanks, Ralph. Second, there's a problem with God's law.

Moses reminds the people of what happened when they received God's law. Look at chapter 5, verse 23. Here he is on the mountain reminding them of what had happened.

He says, verse 23, when you heard the voice out of the darkness, while the mountain was ablaze with fire, all the leading men of your tribes and your elders came to me.

And you said, the Lord our God has shown us his glory and his majesty and we have heard his voice from the fire. Today we have seen that a man can live even if God speaks with him.

But now, why should we die? this great fire will consume us and we will die if we hear the voice of the Lord our God any longer. Now, do you see the tension in those verses?

[20 : 07] They want to hear God's voice. They want to hear God's law because it's good. But they're also afraid if they hear God's voice, if they do get God's law, that they will die.

look at verse 26. For what mortal man has ever heard the voice of the living God speaking out of the fire as we have and survived?

You see, they want to hear, they want God's law, but they can't handle God's law. On the one side they know that God's law is good and it's beautiful, but they also know on the other side that it is dangerous and condemning.

So they've got this tension, we want it, but we can't handle it. You see, God's law brings life and death.

Keep your finger there in chapter 5 and 6 and jump forward to Deuteronomy chapter 30. These verses sum up, if you like, the great tension that exists in the law.

[21 : 28] Deuteronomy chapter 30, verse 15. See, I set before you today life and prosperity, death and destruction.

There's the two things, life and death. Verse 16, for I command you today to love the Lord your God, to walk in his ways, and to keep his commands, decrees, and laws.

Then you will live and increase and the Lord your God will bless you in the land you are entering to possess. But, verse 17, if your hearts turn away and you are not obedient, and if you are drawn away to bow down to other gods and worship them, I declare to you this day that you will certainly be destroyed.

You will not live long in the land you are crossing the Jordan to enter and possess. Go back to chapter 5. So do you see the tension there?

By keeping the law and following the law, it's going to go well for you. But the opposite is also true. If you fail to keep this law, it's going to be disastrous for you.

[22 : 48] God will punish you. God will condemn you. And that's the tension. So the people, they want God's law, they love God's law because it's going to be good for them.

Think of it like this. If you could imagine if we could all keep these Ten Commandments, we would have the most perfect of communities.

Imagine a community where instead of everybody being self-centered and always looking after what they want, they are God-centered.

And God is their priority. community. Imagine a place where looking at the fourth commandment, we understand what work is and what rest is and we have that balance completely right and there's no exploitation of employees and there's no abuse.

Imagine a community where children honour their parents and that all goes right and where parents equally look after their children correctly.

[24 : 09] Imagine a community where there's no murder and we can expand that out to language of hate and retaliation and anger.

Imagine a community where there's no adultery, either of the physical kind or the internet kind, where there's no stealing and that doesn't just mean taking sweets from the shop, it means knocking off early from work or not paying taxes or people charging for things that are more expensive than what they really are, where proper business practices happen.

Imagine a community where there's no lies or unhealthy desires. This all flows out of the Ten Commandments, you see, it's not bad, it's actually good.

And this is the kind of community that we all long for and no wonder the people are saying, yes, we want God's law. We do want it because it is perfectly good for us.

But the more we commit ourselves to God, the more we realise how incapable we are of keeping this law. law. It's too big.

[25 : 29] It's too great. We break it every single day. We don't love God with all our heart and all our soul and all our strength.

We love me. And that's the tension that we face. We want to do what's right. we want God's law because it creates a beautiful life.

It brings about a great community. But the deeper that we get into it, the more that we try to live it and enjoy it, the more it actually overcomes us and we actually drown in God's law because we fail and we fall all the time.

look at chapter 6 verse 25. Look what the people say.

If we are careful to obey all this law before the Lord our God as he has commanded us, that will be our righteousness.

[26 : 36] If we can do everything that God asks of us, we will live in this beautiful relationship with God and with each other. Everything is going to be perfectly good if we can do it.

But that's the problem of the law. And that's our problem too. We want it. We long to obey it. Because it creates the most beautiful and perfect of life and community, we know it will be good for us.

But we just can't keep it. it. We fail and we fall miserably all of the time. So what are we to do with God's law?

Well that brings us to the third aspect, the solution to God's law. Thankfully God has done something about our inability to keep God's law.

Look at chapter 5 verse 4. chapter 5 verse 4.

[27 : 53] The Lord spoke to you face to face out of the fire on that mountain. Moses says, at that time I stood between the Lord and you to declare to you the word of the Lord because you were afraid of the fire and did not go up the mountain.

Moses, do you see, stands in for the people. He stands between God and the people. He acts as a mediator. Now I think we're used to mediators.

We have them whenever there's a breakdown in a relationship between two parties. We've seen it on this island. We have political mediators, as was the case for the Good Friday Agreement.

Someone's speaking on behalf of the other parties. We have marriage mediators who are there to help bring the separated couple back to each other.

Well in his role as a mediator, Moses was there to speak to God for the people and Moses was there to speak to the people for God. Look at chapter 5 verse 26.

[29 : 12] The people said, for what mortal man has ever heard the voice of the living God speaking out of the fires we have and survived? So they said to Moses, verse 27, go near and listen to all that the Lord our God says.

Then you tell us whatever the Lord our God tells you and we will listen and obey. It sounds easy enough, doesn't it?

But here's the difficulty. Moses could only tell the people what God would do. Look, everyone, if you keep the law, God is going to bless you. This is what he's going to do for you.

If you break the law, God is going to punish you. And all Moses could do on the other side was he could only report to God what the people would do. Well, God, you know, the people have promised that they're going to listen to you and obey you.

That's his only function as a mediator. Well, the fact is, they did not listen and they did not obey. And although Moses was a mediator, he could do nothing to make the people obey.

[30 : 22] Moses had no power in himself to change their life or behaviour. So it seems at this stage it's more of a problem than a solution. But God knows the people and God does not give up on his people.

God longs that we would love him and obey him. Look at verse 29. Oh, he says, oh, that their hearts would be inclined to fear me and keep all my commands always so that it might go well with them and their children forever.

This is the cry of a deeply passionate, loving, and committed God. Oh, that their hearts would be inclined to me.

This is the cry of a heartache. God's deepest longing, God's greatest desire is that we would love him, that we would obey him, that we would want to do it.

And God's heart breaks when we turn away from him. And he won't give up on us. And he won't give up on his people.

[31 : 40] So God in his grace provides another mediator. He sends a better and greater mediator, mediator, the perfect mediator, Jesus Christ.

Because in his role as mediator, Jesus comes to stand in for us. Jesus is the one who came into the world to represent us.

My life becomes his life and his life becomes my life. Well, how does that work out? we'll get these two ideas.

First, Jesus loved and obeyed God perfectly for us. Jesus kept the law that we could never keep on our behalf.

Jesus, when he walked this earth, was the only one who could truly say, I loved God with all my heart, with all my soul, and with all my strength.

[32 : 46] Jesus kept the Ten Commandments perfectly. He never got any of them wrong. He obeyed God's law for us, so that we might freely receive the blessings of God, that we might enjoy God and a relationship with him.

So that's what he does on one side. But it's so much more, because on the other side, he doesn't just keep the law, Jesus takes the blame for our disobedience.

He takes the failure to keep the law on himself, and he suffers the punishment that we deserve. That's what his death on the cross is all about. The judgment that Jesus received was a judgment for you and for me.

And he stands in for us. He takes the hit for us. Jesus suffered hell, which is like an eternity without commands.

where everybody does as they like, destroying one another, wrecking one another. And Jesus suffered hell for us so that we might enjoy heaven and eternity with him where everybody does obey and everybody does everything perfectly right.

[34 : 06] We can summarize it like this on the screen. it's there. Jesus was treated as a lawbreaker for us so that we might be treated as a lawkeeper like him.

That's what he did for us. So, what does that mean in terms of the law today? What's our relationship with the law? Does it mean we just throw the law out?

We don't need the Ten Commandments? Sure, Jesus died for us and forgave us. That's all right now. I don't need the law. Well, no, remember what we said at the beginning. Rescue came first, then came the relationship.

Grace comes first, then comes the law. God doesn't give us the law and say, listen guys, if you obey this law perfectly, I will love you and I will care for you and I will give my life for you.

If you keep this law perfectly, I will accept you and welcome you. No, God never says that. God says, because I have kept the law for you, I love you.

[35 : 23] Because I was punished as a lawbreaker for you, I welcome you and I accept you. Because I died for you, I give you my good law.

A law not there so you can try and earn my favour, but a law that is there to say, follow this law as a way of saying, thank you that you are my saviour.

It's not there to earn favour, but to say thank you for being my saviour. God's law is a good law, because it points us to Jesus and helps us to see our need of Jesus.

But Jesus then in turn brings us back to the law and says, follow the law as a way of saying thank you to me for all that I have done for you. Let's pray.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Our Father God, we thank you for your good law.

[36 : 43] We thank you that you have given us your words so that we know how to live. And we pray that as we read your law, as we seek to follow it, it would remind us daily of your amazing grace, of how you have rescued us and blessed us and given us so much.

And help us in the days, the hours, the moments, where we're so conscious of us failing, that we would run to Christ and remember that he is the one who has not only kept the law for us, but taken the punishment for breaking the law.

and he has given us new life in its place. So help us to live in the light of that today. Help us to live in the light of that in our relationships within our family, within our community, in our places of work, and help us to show the grace of God to those around us as we seek to follow your ways.

We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. So in response to what we've heard this morning, particularly Jesus' role as our mediator, we're going to sing before the throne of God above.

We're coming seated. This serves as a good introduction to our time around the Lord's table. So we just want to continue that thought or that idea of Jesus as our mediator, the person that stands in the gap for us, between us and a righteous and Holy God.

[39 : 04] Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Before the throne of God above I have a stronger, perfect plea A great high priest whose name is love Whoever lives and pleads for me My name is graven on his hands My name is written on his heart I know that while in heaven he stands No tongue can bid me hence depart No tongue can bid me hence depart When Satan tempts me to despair And tells me of the guilt within

Upward I look and see him there Who made an end to all my sin Because the sinless Savior died My sinful soul is counted free But God the just is satisfied To look on him and pardon me To look on him and pardon me To look on him and pardon me Behold him there, the risen Lamb My perfect, spotless righteousness The great, unchangeable I am The King of glory and of grace One with himself I cannot find My sinful soul is healed by his blood For life is his with Christ on high

With Christ my Savior and my God With Christ my Savior and my God The King of the Lord And cond complètement We are dead And then we areHHH First, we areVS And then we are eventually