

Saved therefore obey

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[0 : 00] So if you've got your Bibles or devices, open them up to chapter 19 in Exodus, starting at verse 1. On the first day of the third month, after the Israelites left Egypt, on that very day, they came to the desert of Sinai.

After they set out from Rephidim, they entered the desert of Sinai, and Israel camped there in the desert in front of the mountain. Then Moses went up to God, and the Lord called to him from the mountain and said, This is what you are to say to the descendants of Jacob and what you are to tell the people of Israel.

You yourselves have seen what I did to Egypt and how I carried you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself. Now, if you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then out of all nations you will be my treasured possession.

Although the whole earth is mine, you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. These are the words you are to speak to the Israelites.

So Moses went back and summoned the elders of the people and set before them all the words the Lord had commanded him to speak. The people all responded together, We will do everything the Lord has said.

[1 : 27] So Moses brought their answer back to the Lord. The Lord said to Moses, I am going to come to you in a dense cloud so that the people will hear me speaking with you and will always put their trust in you.

Then Moses told the Lord what the people had said. And the Lord said to Moses, Go to the people and consecrate them today and tomorrow. Have them wash their clothes and be ready by the third day, because on that day the Lord will come down on Mount Sinai in the sight of all the people. Put limits for the people around the mountain and tell them, Be careful that you do not approach the mountain or touch the foot of it. Whoever touches the mountain is to be put to death.

They are to be stoned or shot with arrows. Not a hand is to be laid on them. No person or animal shall be permitted to live. Only when the ram's horn sounds a long blast may they approach the mountain.

After Moses had gone down the mountain to the people, he consecrated them and they washed their clothes. Then he said to the people, Prepare yourselves for the third day.

[2 : 44] Abstain from sexual relations. On the morning of the third day, there was thunder and lightning with a thick cloud over the mountain and a very loud trumpet blast.

Everyone in the camp trembled. Then Moses led the people out of the camp to meet with God and they stood at the foot of the mountain. Mount Sinai was covered with smoke because the Lord descended on it within fire.

The smoke billowed up from it like smoke from a furnace and the whole mountain trembled violently. As the sound of the trumpet grew louder and louder, Moses spoke and the voice of God answered him.

The Lord descended to the top of Mount Sinai and called Moses to the top of the mountain. So Moses went up. Let's jump to chapter 20 starting at verse 1.

And God spoke all these words. I am the Lord your God who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery.

[3 : 51] You shall have no other gods before me. You shall not make for yourself an image in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below.

You shall not bow to them or worship them. For I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the parents 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.

You shall not misuse the name of the Lord your God. For the Lord will not hold anyone guiltless who misuses his name. Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy.

Six days you shall labour 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 male or female servant, nor your animals, nor any foreigner residing in your towns.

For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea and all that is in them, but he rested on the seventh day.

[5 : 16] Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy. Honour your father and your mother, so that you may live long in the land the Lord your God is giving you.

You shall not murder. You shall not commit adultery. You shall not steal.

You shall not give false testimony against your neighbour. You shall not covet your neighbour's house. You shall not covet your neighbour's wife or his male or female servant, his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbour.

This is the Lord's word and law to us today. Well, good morning, everyone. A warm welcome if you're visiting this morning.

My name is David. I'm a pastor here. Will you please pray with me as we come to God's word? Lord, I'm conscious that my words can't display your greatness as we've just sung, but your words can.

[6 : 34] And I ask that you would speak powerfully through your word and point us to the Lord Jesus Christ. Pour out your spirit among us now. In Jesus' name I pray.

Amen. Well, you might think all this fire and being afraid, this is maybe why you don't really like coming to church and this Bible reading.

But maybe Bob Dylan can help us see how freeing the Ten Commandments are. Here's Bob Dylan. You may be an ambassador to England or France. You may like to gamble. You may like to dance. You may be the heavyweight champion of the world. You might be a socialite with a long string of pearls.

You may be a businessman or some high-degree thief. You may call... They may call you doctor or they may call you chief. John called me chief just the other day.

[7 : 35] Thanks, John. You may be a preacher preaching spiritual pride. You may be a city councilman taking bribes on the side.

But you're going to have to serve somebody. Yes, you are. You're going to have to serve somebody.

Serve somebody. Well, there's Bob Dylan, if I can't convince you. To be human is to live for something.

You've got to live for something. And whatever that something is gives your life meaning, whether it's in your business as a businessman or a socialite with your long string of pearls.

Whatever you centre your life on, whatever is part of that core of who you are that gives your life meaning, whatever is at the centre, you're serving that thing.

[8 : 31] You've got to serve somebody. You've got to live for something. Whatever you're living for, you're serving. Well, the Hebrews were slaves to...

They were serving an absolute monarch, Pharaoh, in Egypt. They were burdened with heavy work to build Pharaoh's cities. They were afflicted, their boys thrown into the Nile.

God heard their cries. He came with power in the ten plagues and rescued them. And Pharaoh chased after them. And at the Red Sea, they walked through on dry ground.

And Pharaoh, all their enemies are destroyed in a moment. Now, if we were writing Exodus, if we were reading Exodus, maybe we want the story to stop there.

They're free. That's freedom, isn't it? It's a blank slate. They're in the wilderness. They don't have any masters over them.

[9 : 33] Isn't that what our culture says freedom is? Freedom from all restraints? Freedom to give expression to your desires, to build your identity on whatever you want.

I'm an architect. I play for the junior nights. I'm an involved mum with career aspirations. That's freedom, isn't it?

Wilderness. As we come to the Ten Commandments, are Israel swapping one tyrant for another? Because Yahweh's repeated goal of setting them free is really clear.

He says to Pharaoh again and again, let my people go, that they may serve me in the wilderness. We're only going to see life and freedom if we agree with Bob Dylan. You've got to serve somebody. You've got to. The question is, are you building your life on the right thing, on the right someone?

[10:44] Right. We find it really, really hard, I think close to impossible, without God's help, to understand God's desire for our obedience.

We find this so hard. The obedience God demands is in response to salvation. It's not to earn salvation.

And that's true here for Israel. If you're following along in your Bibles, 19 verse 4, you yourselves have seen what I did to the Egyptians and how I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself.

Now therefore, God's initiative, God's choice, God's doing, God's grace, saved, therefore, obey. We find that so hard to get our heads around. In ancient times, they built their cities around mountains or a man-made mountain so that they could climb up, offer the sacrifices to the gods and bring the blessing down on their lives.

[12:09] That might sound primitive to us today, but aren't we still climbing? Isn't our society still, by our own resources, climb, climb, climb, bring blessing down on your life?

Work harder. Be smarter. Climb the social competition, climb the corporate ladder. Get into the property market by your own resources.

Climb, climb, climb and bring blessing down on yourself. God's city is built on totally opposite, which is what principle, it's totally opposite principle.

God comes down. We don't climb up. He comes down. You are completely accepted.

You have nothing to prove. You already fully belong to me. I did it all. Therefore, obey.

[13:18] We struggle to get our head around that. But if we do, it radically changes our motivation for obedience.

Because if God has given all of himself to us, or to Israel, he now wants Israel to reciprocate, give all of themselves to him.

I think part of the proof that we don't get this is, I wonder if your mind, your heart is asking, well, if it's all God's doing, if I'm accepted, I'm valued, I'm loved, all by God's doing, what's the motivation to obey?

If the fear of punishment is removed, what's the motivation? Let's have a look at God's purposes for the law.

Israel's high calling. Look at chapter 19, verses 5 and 6. Ancient monarchs, they owned everything.

[14:57] The roads, the buildings, the citizens. But, there would be certain items they would have for their own enjoyment. There would be people they would invite to sit at their table to enjoy their presence.

The Lord owns everything. He owns North Korea. He owns all the nations. He owns the stars. And Israel, when you obey me, you can know that I'm treasuring you.

The law tells Israel how to please God.

When you fall in love with someone, what you do you work out what, what does it, what pleases that person? And you want to give it.

And it doesn't feel like coercion. Because your happiness is, you place it in their happiness. God hasn't left us aiming in the dark to know what he wants.

[16:09] He says to Israel, here's how you can please me. And when you do this, you can know I'm treasuring you. You're mine.

You're my special possession. Obey so that you know that I'm treasuring you.

This was never meant to remain the sole privilege of Israel. And we see this with the other descriptions of their calling. They to be a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.

God wants all the nations to look at Israel and see justice and peace and prosperity and a satisfaction in God treasuring them.

He wants Israel to be a light for the nations. I know priests is a term that is mixed up with pretty negative stuff for us in Australia given all the scandals.

[17:17] But if you think about what a priest is, a priest has access to God. A priest knows God. Or ought to.

These are all ought to. A priest goes in to God on someone else's behalf. The whole nation of Israel would have access to this God. This God will be dwelling in their midst.

The way they live was to represent the nations and bring the nations to God. If they obey the law, their society would just be so different from every other society on earth.

Their calling is to attract the nations to God, to show the world a radically different way. So treasured possession is why they should obey.

To draw the nations to God as a kingdom of priests being so different from every other culture that lives. God wants to be known first by Israel and then all the world.

[18 : 34] That's really good news that God wants to be known. We see here he wants to make a covenant. This isn't just head knowledge about God.

He wants covenant binding commitment like a marriage. Now instead of signing the marriage certificate at the end of this covenant in chapter 24 they sacrifice animals and Moses gets the blood and sprinkles it.

Sprinkles the blood on the people. It's quite a visual sign of God wants a binding commitment. The blood saying so be it done to me.

if I break this. He wants binding commitment. He wants to be known.

He's coming down. But we see here how hard it is for sinful people to get close to God. one of my first theology essays at Bible college I picked a subject a topic that some of my classmates didn't dare to pick and I think I was pretty smug and people were asking me while I was writing about my research then I got my mark back.

[20 : 05] I'm not going to tell you my mark but you might fire me but I was emotionally and psychologically crushed for weeks. It just put me into a spin.

imagine if I came face to face with theology himself if a mark could do that to me.

Imagine if God if I got close to God the weight of his being I think it would be like an elephant trying to give a mouse a cuddle just the weight of his being or the light of his goodness it would be more clarity than your 8k television it would just expose all the dark spots in me the depths of my evil he's described here as fire he's holy fire he's so different to us don't think of God as just a bigger version of ourselves he's so different and he's so pure the ten commandments with more clarity than ever before in history show us his character he is a God who loves truth he loves justice he wants love he is jealous for all your heart he wants us to love our neighbour as our self so he wants to be known but we see how difficult it is we run into that human problem we were made to know God he wants a binding covenant but we can't live with God we can't live without him and we can't live with him I don't know if you notice here that we need a mediator Moses is going up and down up and down up and down we need someone a holy man to connect God and us we need there is no such thing in the Bible in reality of a relationship with God without a mediator so many good reasons for the law God wants to be known he's calling Israel be a light to the nations to draw people to myself we should be cheering Israel on come on succeed bring the nations to God the elders and all the people of

Israel say all that the Lord has spoken we will do we will be obedient but the law has another purpose it reveals a deeper slavery in Israel than Egypt a much deeper one inside we've seen a foretaste of it with their grumbling in the wilderness there's a slavery in every human heart and the law reveals that slavery I came across a really I suppose it's a poetic description of the idea of morals and ethics in our society at the moment this isn't a Christian saying ethics is so far from the very structure of the cosmos it's not built into the cosmos in other words it's a matter of personal taste like a designer label sewed into the inside lining of conscience it's personal taste like a designer label sewed into the inside lining of personal conscience how's that going for us in

[24 : 30] Australia government website says that in 2022 2023 one woman was killed every 11 days in Australia from their intimate partner one man every 91 days isn't that awful we were sharing our online scam stories around the dinner table the other day imagine a society that didn't target the elderly to scam them out of their retirement savings who actually gave honour to the elderly these laws I want to live here I think these laws are written on our conscience

I'm not going to defend them I think we know they're good they would create such a true community of trust the first four show us what it means to love God the six after that show us what it means to love our neighbor I love them and yet there's something about me that if God sees my heart and not just my behavior I've broken them all how can that be and the law also shows us how our hearts really work there's a priority in the Ten Commandments Martin Luther the reformer pointed out the

priority of the first commandment God God is jealous he's not insecure and needy but he's like a husband who is jealous when another man places his hand on his wife's knee he gets jealous that's a very good thing he's like a husband he will not share if we if

I loved God we wouldn't break the other commandments I wouldn't lie I just think about why do I lie sometimes it's to protect my reputation sometimes it's to make sure I get some outcome I really want sometimes it's to avoid punishment in other words something in that moment is more central to me is more important to me than God if God was before me I would love truth no matter the cost if I love God I wouldn't covet I order something at a restaurant I see what Emma gets and then I'm coveting what she chose that food envy I can covet people's health people's fitness I covet people's intelligence

I covet their charisma their discipline someone even has gifts in church someone preaches better than me coveting their gifts I can look at another church and go wow they're thriving it's everywhere I turn every waking moment coveting is not letting God be God I could look at a nice house and say well they've got a really lovely house it's much nicer than mine and that's okay God is God he's good he knows what he's doing no I must change my lot I must have that barbecue they've got I don't know whatever it is for you I'm probably speaking to the men here talking about barbecues I wouldn't covet if God was centre in my life if I was content finding in him what things in this world can never satisfy when we break the other commandments something other than

God in that moment is more central and desirable the law puts up this mirror it's very uncomfortable isn't it the law puts up this mirror the law is good but it shows me my heart it shows Israel their heart and there's a deep slavery there much deeper than willpower can overcome we should be cheering Israel on come on obey we didn't read it but before Moses even comes down from the mountain with the two tablets one copy for God one copy for his people they're already committing spiritual adultery on their wedding night the law shows us a really deep slavery in the human heart and it prepares us for many years later when a

[30 : 26] Jewish man stands on a mountain and says you've heard that it was said to those of old you shall not murder but I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment you've heard that it was said you shall not commit adultery but I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart do not think I have come to abolish the law or the prophets I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them Jesus keeps the law and that he's unlike anyone who's ever existed he keeps the law but he's saying much more than that when he says I've come to fulfill the law he's saying the law pointed forward to a time to a goal

I am that goal I am a greater mediator than Moses coming down from heaven and he creates a covenant with much better blood he takes that cup this is the new covenant in my blood he sprinkles his people not your blood will be spilled my blood the judgment that the law shows that we deserve all taken on him the condition of the mosaic covenant if you obey is fulfilled once and for all by the obedience of Jesus God is just as holy today his beauty and perfection is a consuming raging fire but in

Jesus the limits to the mountain are taken off the fear of judgment is gone there's a trumpet blast come summoning us come not to a mountain come into heaven itself and pray in the name of Jesus our father you can in Jesus we can call this holy God our father all all with faith in Jesus and what he has done we're not gathered at a mountain we're not we're not just gathered here this morning if you're a believer we're gathered in the sun I want to read a bit of 1

Peter 2 9 and 10 talking to the church you are a chosen race a royal priesthood a holy nation a people for his own possession that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light once you were not a people but now you are God's people once you had not received mercy but now you have received mercy do you notice the key difference in that passage there's no conditional if you obey in Christ in the sun you are it's just a description now it's

God's nature to give all of himself the father giving all things to his son the son gladly giving all of himself to the father in obedience the father sending his son to rescue us to bring us into his marvelous light the son sprinkling us with his blood our jealous God calls us to respond to his self giving by giving all of ourselves to him to serve God is not slavery we were made to know him we were made for our pleasure to be in God's treasuring in us pleasure in us it is his supreme act of love to demand that we serve him with all our hearts because we're made for him our joy is full

when we give all of ourselves to him well the angels in heaven cry holy holy holy holy
[36 : 07] I think they're saying more than moral moral moral is God I think it's deeper than that it's more like you are God you are God you are God and this God says to his church his blood bought church you are my holy nation I know I'm struggling here are you getting something of the privilege of that in the son you are you are my holy nation by yourself by the way I just want to point that out the church as we relate to one another gathered around Christ we're called to be a light to declare his praises how we relate to one another in true worship true love our identity is so transcendent it should transcend anything else that would divide us any difference amongst us at the moment it's just diversity in the one true people of

God I hope we sense something of the privilege of being the church of the living God let me finish you're gonna serve somebody you're gonna if you center your life on any other thing even good things if you build your identity and your purpose on that thing it will crush you when you fail it or when it fails you if you run into the arms of the holy God his son creates a new covenant with sprinkled blood and he gives us a transcendent calling to be his people to be a light to the world for church you are a royal priesthood a holy nation a people for his own possession that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light once you were not a people but now you are

God's people once you had not received mercy now you have to receive mercy father we thank you for your son who you see us in him our failures as far removed from you as the east is from the west his blood taking all that away and his obedience is now our obedience your pleasure in your son is now your pleasure in us father we find this so hard to comprehend i pray that you give us spiritual power to understand the depths of your love so that we might respond to you in obedience and count it as life not not only duty but our joy to give all of ourselves to you our God who gave all of himself to us please help us in this church to live up to our calling forgive us when we don't in Jesus name Amen