

“Ten Commandments: See His Blessing before His Law”

One day when I was in my twenties, my father instructed me: “My son, do not lose the opportunity that is given to you in your life.” I thought there was a two-sided meaning: one is to actively use the right opportunities given to me, and the other is to thoroughly reject opportunities that are not right for me.

My father's lesson posed a great challenge to me, and implementing it was never easy for me. Since then, I have missed, forgotten, and sometimes misused opportunities. Every time I do that, there is a very big burden on my mind. It was because I felt disappointed in myself and sorry for not bringing joy to my father.

Now, it has been exactly 30 years since my father passed away, and I, too, am getting closer and closer to the age of my father when he passed. Of course, even now I remember the lesson from time to time and repeat it, but I still make mistakes related to the opportunities I have been given. However, I don't dwell on the burden like I did before.

It is because I realized the original meaning of the lesson my father gave me. The purpose of the lesson was not for my father to simply burden me. Rather, it was to help me live a worthwhile life by carefully discerning the opportunities in my life. So, I am really happy and grateful for that lesson.

Today's Exodus scripture introduces the Ten Commandments given to Israel and us through Moses. How do you react when you read the Ten Commandments? I think many people are turned off by the language of the commandments because all our attention is focused on two disciplines: "Do" and "Do not."

These are the rules we listen to in our home, school, and society as well. However, it seems like the Ten Commandments demand a stricter and higher level of practice that cannot be compared with the laws of society.

On the day they received these Ten Commandments, the Israelites felt that God and His commandments approached them like death. So they trembled in fear and stepped back from God. At that moment, both God and his commandments were a fearful opponent to them. Was God really expecting such a disruptive reaction from His people?

However, Moses came close to the dark cloud where God was at that time. Did Moses have the powers supernatural enough to keep these commandments perfectly? Not by any means; he was a man of human weakness. What was the difference between the people who feared God and Moses, the leader who drew close to God?

Moses knew the greatness and faithfulness of God. His confession to God is illustrated in the "Song of Moses," recorded in Exodus 15. Moses looked not to the commandment given but to God the Almighty, who gave it to his people. Then he knew that these commandments were a guideline for man to approach God.

Yes. All human actions are carried out under two guidelines: what we should do and what we shouldn't do. The Ten Commandments shed light on the precise guidelines of action we should take throughout our lives. They tell us of the God who made us and how we should behave.

Therefore, if we fully implement this commandment, we can stand before our Creator and neighbors as proud and shameless beings. However, we are bound to face difficulties and despair from the very first steps to implementing this commandment. It is because humans cannot fully obey these commandments. The more we try to keep them, the more we only discover our incompetent limits.

So, did God really want to confine us to this limit of despair, or did He introduce us to a way to solve this limit? The Exodus text of today's sermon contains a total of 16 verses, and 10 commandments are introduced here. With two verses each in the middle, a total of four verses were skipped between the commandments. However, in these four verses, we can find a clue.

Here we find the promise hidden behind the commandments. In fact, the commandments are promises of blessing in the form of commands. The law is a command, but at the same time, it is a promise. Because, from the time God gave these commandments, he presupposed that they could be fully fulfilled only through Jesus Christ.

If we accept God's promises as orders, we become legalists who do not recognize Jesus the Savior, the perfecter of the law. However, after meeting Jesus, Paul became a disciple of Jesus, despite being a legalist. After meeting Jesus, he handed over the demands of the commandments, which he had tried to complete on his own, to Jesus, the perfecter of all commandments.

Now let us look at the content of the blessings contained in the commandments. Verse 6 says, "I, the Lord, show my love to thousands of generations of those who love me and obey my laws." And verse 11 says, "I, the Lord, blessed the Sabbath and made it holy." Consequently, God promises to bless those who rest and worship the Lord on the Sabbath.

Let us reflect on the fifth commandment: "Honor your father and mother." What poses the most significant threat to human peace in modern times? Is it an economic crisis, a climate crisis, or a war crisis? On the contrary, it is a crisis that involves the breakdown of the family structure. We truly learn to respect our parents, not during our upbringing under their care, but rather when we ourselves become parents.

We often forget the countless times we defied or opposed our parents while growing up under their protection. Without the guidance of the commandment to honor one's parents, families and the essence of parenthood might cease to exist in this world. Hence, we can clearly observe that the Ten Commandments are laws that steadfastly ensure genuine protection for humanity.

By the way, Jesus revealed what the law and the prophets originally meant in the gospel of Matthew 22 of the New Testament (vs. 37–40): "We love God and our neighbors completely." Even today's Ten Commandments are all summed up as "commandments of love." Through our love, this commandment is fulfilled.

If so, how can we, who are full of hatred, complete this noble love? Is it possible? When we believe in the blood of Jesus sacrificed on the cross, reconciling our relationship with God, which was broken by human sin, we can fulfill the love given to us. When I, who am weak, rely on the Almighty Savior, He works for me and makes this possible. That's why we get joy through faith.

The Ten Commandments are the necessary conditions for the fulfillment of our salvation. But we can't afford this. Therefore, this became a demand for the Lamb Jesus, who was sacrificed for us. When I take Jesus as my Savior, who has fulfilled that request, we gain the desire and the ability to live like Jesus.

Although our ability to keep the commandments may fall short of God's standards and even our own standards, we can still carry out this commandment with joy by loving Jesus, who walks with me through the Holy Spirit every day. We believe that He has already done our part.

This is a wife's confession. It is customary for a husband to kiss his wife's lips with love before going to work. However, instead of a kiss, the woman's husband gave her a note of things to do in the house before he returned. If she missed anything on the note, the husband used tremendous violence against his wife.

After living 30 years like this, her house was like a prison. While she was sighing and living in pain, her husband suddenly got cancer and died. Years later, she met a man who respected and loved her and married again. She set up a honeymoon in the house where she lived, but one day while cleaning the sofa, she found a crumpled paper note between the cushions. Tears flowed from her eyes as she opened the note and read it. This is because it was one of the wretched notes from her ex-husband, who took 30 years of her life.

As she read it, she noticed that there were more things she did now on a daily basis while living with the man she loved than there were items on the list her ex-husband wrote down. Tearing the note and putting it in the trash, the woman realized that all of the things she was doing at home were joyful and painless because she was doing them for the one, she loved.

This story illustrates that when there is law without love, every action becomes something we dread. Law without love is dangerous and coercive, but when love is combined with the law, it becomes joyful and pain-free.

John Sedgwick once said, "Failure to uphold the law at all leads to chaos and indulgence, but an excessive emphasis on the law leads to despair and discouragement." I pray that all of us seek the wisdom to understand that embracing the laws given to us by God through Jesus Christ will lead us to freedom and eternal life. Amen.

****Reflection and Application for Today's Sermon:**

- 1) Let's read "The Song of Moses," recorded in Exodus 15:1-18. How does the victory he experienced comfort you and give you courage today?
- 2) How does God's promise of blessing and protection contained in the Ten Commandments affect your understanding of the Ten Commandments?
- 3) If you fail to keep the commandments of the law, how will you then pray for the grace of Jesus and the help of the Holy Spirit?