

Ten Commandments - The Pathway to Human Flourishing

Deuteronomy 5:6-22

Preached by Phillip Kayser at DCC on Sunday, February 8, 2026

I. Introduction

Pagan academics have so many different (and conflicting) definitions of what constitutes liberty. The same is true of human rights. Americans love to talk about the right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness - until (that is) you try to apply that phrase to the baby they want to abort, or to the war they want America to be involved in, or to the welfare system that grossly violates the eighth commandment, etc. And in this sermon I hope to show that without the ten commandments (especially the first commandment), the very *idea* of liberties and rights are meaningless. All of a sudden those babies, the citizens of other countries, or those citizens robbed by taxes don't seem have the same right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. And what is liberty anyway? Too many people think that liberty is simply the absence of restraint or the right to do whatever I feel like doing. No, no, no. That's not liberty. That is bondage to your flesh.

Think of liberty this way - a train actually loses its liberty, power, speed, and functionality when it jumps its tracks. On the other hand, when it completely restricts itself to the railroad tracks (symbol of the Ten Commandments), the train beautifully functions the way it was intended to function. Or to use another illustration, our lungs have the most liberty when they breathe air, not water. And in the same way, Deuteronomy 5 shows us that liberty has a foundation in grace, guardrails in the law, and it has a gracious purpose in God's plan.

II. Salvation provides the foundation for liberty (v. 6)

And as verse 6 points out, the foundation for Israel's liberty was their salvation by God's grace. God never tires to remind them of this. Deuteronomy is not just a book of the law; it is a book that is saturated with Gospel. Before God gave them the ten commandments, He reminded them that He had already redeemed them. Verse 6 says, "I am the LORD your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage." They had *groaned* under their bondage in Egypt - a time when they knew nothing of God's written laws. There is a sense in which their greatest bondage was when they were not walking in God's laws. But law alone does not bring liberty either. It is *redemption* that frees us up to delight in God's laws. Law without redemption brings condemnation. But redemption without Law makes us aimless.

So God *begins* with a declaration of His already accomplished redemption and the liberty into which they have been brought. Israel is not going to be told how to *become* free. He starts by telling them that they are *already* free, and God's laws are now being given to show them the pathway to *continued* liberty and human flourishing. God liberates first, then instructs. Deuteronomy is basically an instruction manual to teach us how to flourish

in our dominion. But the true pathway to flourishing has grace *preceding* obedience. On the other hand, a slave who has just come out of bondage needs guidance and structure if he is to flourish. He's not used to his freedom, is he? Freedom without direction would lead to chaos. Modern culture wants *lawless* liberty. In contrast, Scripture offers the redeemed the *true* pathway to continued liberty.

III. These ten guardrails for human flourishing (vv. 7-12) are applied to life in Deuteronomy 6:1-26:19

And before I dig into the Ten Commandments, I want to point out that the Ten Commandments form the content outline of chapters 6-26. A lot of people don't recognize the structure of Deuteronomy. But God takes each commandment in the order in which it was given, and then gives an exposition of the *implications* of that commandment in real life situations. If you want to use an analogy of a building, the ten commandments are the load-bearing beams, and chapters 6-26 are the rooms, walls, corridors, paint, and furniture that is in the rooms. By the time we get to the end of chapter 26, we will see that no sphere of life is neutral or law-free.

But I want to hasten to say once again that the ten commandments are not prison bars that keep us in prison. They are guardrails on a dangerous mountain road. Or to use the earlier analogy, they are train tracks that enable us to be all that we were made to be and to take dominion as God intended us to take dominion.

OK, let's move on. I want to give you a very brief introduction to each commandment, how God gives an exposition of it, and what duties and rights God says are logically involved in each commandment. And I will spend far more time on the first two commandments so that you can get a bit more of an idea of how God intends to give an exposition of each commandment in the rest of the book.

A. Commandment One (v. 6) is expanded in 6:1-11:32

1. The sanctity of God - Duties

The first commandment focuses upon the sanctity of God. Verse 6 says, "You shall have no other gods before Me." Now that we are a redeemed people, our identity is forever wrapped up in the One true God. In Egypt they were under bondage to a multitude of Egyptian gods. When God redeemed them, He wanted them to remain loyal to Him and to maintain the liberties that He had purchased at such great cost. A people who do not maintain the sanctity of the One True God will automatically come once again under bondage to other gods. It's inevitable. So for each commandment I will look at duties, and then I will look at rights.

When it comes to duties of the first commandment as related to our nation, I think the USA captured the purpose of the first commandment rather well in its national motto - one nation under God. And just as Israel came into bondage to sexual addictions, perversions, child sacrifice, and tyranny when they deviated from the first commandment and began to

embrace Baal, or some of the other gods of the neighboring nations, America has come into bondage to drugs, perversions, gang violence, wokism, child sacrifice, and socialism. Deviate from the duty of the first commandment and you will automatically deviate from the liberties that God intended us to have. And Marxism is about as far removed from liberty as you could possibly get. (So I am sort of mixing both sub-points together here.) Americans are naively buying into Marxism, and claiming it will bring liberty and prosperity by robbing the rich and giving to the poor (supposedly). Let me read a brief excerpt from an email that Dr. Peter Jones sent to me two weeks ago. He said,

Marxism via Stalin and Mao killed millions of human beings during the twentieth century, and Marxist Pol Pot in Cambodia systematically murdered about three million of his own people (a quarter of all Cambodians) from 1976 to 1978. Anyone considered an intellectual was targeted for special treatment. Teachers, lawyers, doctors, and clergy were put to death. Pol Pot's regime of terror even murdered people wearing glasses! One might think that a system so unthinkable would never enter the American system. For the moment, America's Marxism conceals itself and is generally accepted in its subtle form: Wokism...¹

And he goes on to explain wokism and the tyranny that is resulting. This is what happens when our nation rejects the true God of the Bible. When a culture removes God from its center, *some other ultimate authority will always take His place*. So commandment one shows that the redeemed must have exclusive loyalty to the One true God. And I won't get into all of the duties that He outlines in His exposition of this commandment in chapters 6-11, but since most people don't consider the rights and liberties that are lost when we abandon our duties to His law, let me focus on those.

2. The sanctity of God - Rights and Liberties

What are some of the rights and liberties that we see laid out in God's exposition of this first commandment in chapter 6:1 through chapter 11:32? Believe it or not, almost the first right that God gives is the right of homeschooling. It is no surprise that as the state takes on more and more of a God-like character, homeschooling is one of the first things that is lost. This past week some of you have written to your Senators about a horrible bill that would have allowed the state to begin regulating homeschooling and Christian schooling - as if *they* have done a good job of educating children. - NOT!!! Not at all. Homeschooled children have consistently scored way higher in academics. But it is unthinkable to some Senators that anything would be out from under their regulation. But here is the thing - for the state to claim ownership of our children and demand the right to educate them and regulate their education is (according to Deuteronomy) to make the state into a substitute god. Otherwise it would make no sense for God to put the right of homeschooling under the first commandment. This is why no Marxist country has ever allowed anyone but the state to educate children. Public schools provide a god-like control-center for statism. Statism cannot survive without government schools (or what I call propaganda centers) - which makes it wierd that *Christians* are some of the most ardent *supporters* of government

¹ TruthXChange email, January 20.

schools. It's ultra weird. But according to God's exposition of the first commandment, government schools are automatically a violation of the first commandment. So the first right listed is the right to homeschool.

But there are other rights listed in those chapters. We will see that the first commandment also gives citizens the right to be free from an all-intrusive government because it tells civil governments not to add to or take away from the law of God. The state is bound by the Regulative Principle of Government. What is the Regulative Principle of Government? Let me contrast it with the Freedom Principle of Self-Government. Where individuals and families have the freedom principle - that they can do anything that God has not explicitly prohibited, the church and state may only do what God has explicitly authorized them to do. Both church and state are under the Regulative Principle of Government. Individuals and families are not. This gives maximum liberty to citizens. Christians who reject the Regulative Principle of Government for the state are automatically asking for the civil government to take away more and more of their liberties.

God lays out a third example of rights and liberties in those chapters. Since God is the owner of us and all that we have, *He* is the author of the right to own property as a stewardship trust. That is contrary to Marxism and other forms of communism that claim the state owns all land and if they allow us to use the land (with taxation) it is out of the goodness of their hearts. But according to Deuteronomy, magistrates engage in criminal activity when they try to steal that property from us. And we will see that that right flows logically from the first commandment. And the more our civil government throws off our national motto - one nation under God, the more the state will tend to tax and control our private property.

In Deuteronomy 8:5 God says that He disciplines us as a father would discipline his son. By making God's discipline a model for our discipline, this gives the right of discipline to parents, but it also gives children the right to not be abused by their parents. The first commandment gives that balance.

Deuteronomy 10 gives rights to strangers, orphans, and widows. But those rights are not administered by the state, but by godly citizens. When we get to those chapters, we will see why liberties and rights flow from each of these commandments. But I wanted to at least *introduce* you to the idea that these ten commandments were intended to help citizens to flourish. But I will need to be super-brief in outlining just a few samples so that this sermon doesn't go too long. (I think I timed it at 45 minutes.)

B. Commandment Two (vv. 7-10) is expanded in 12:1-13:18

1. The sanctity of devotion - Duties

The second commandment deals with the sanctity of worship and devotion. It prohibits making pictures or images of God as well as worshiping or reverencing such pictures or images. Roman Catholics violate this commandment in all of their churches. And I want you to notice how universal this prohibition is. God says,

“You shall not make for yourself a carved image—any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth; 9 you shall not bow down to them nor serve them. For I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generations of those who hate Me, 10 but showing mercy to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments.

That is a rebuke to Roman Catholics and Eastern Orthodox who venerate, kiss, and bow down to icons of God & Jesus. But Protestants, while not kissing and bowing down to icons, still make images of God in books, paintings, and movies. But these verses remind us of how dangerous that is. It not only inflicts judgments on the violators, but also inflicts judgments on their children to the third and fourth generations - that is, unless the third or fourth generations have explicitly renounced the sins of their ancestors and asked God to remove the curse. Breaking off the curses of previous generations is so important. If you’ve never done that, please do it. You don’t want your ancestors sins visited upon you.

But notice God’s *jealousy* when we make images of Him. His jealousy makes him angry with such spiritual adultery. When we get to the exposition of this commandment later in Deuteronomy, we will see that God demands that worship of Him be according to His prescription (what Reformed people call the Regulative Principle of Worship), and not add elements of worship just because we think that they might be sweet.

But we will see many other implications. Gary North points out that this command would have made it impossible for Israel to enter into treaties with neighboring countries because ancient treaties always involved the images of the god of that nation. This was one of the things that also led to the persecution of Christians in first century Rome. Christians refused to give a pinch of incense to the images of Rome. The Roman authorities couldn’t understand why Christians were so stubborn. It’s just an image! What’s the big deal!? But that image was an explicit rejection of the true God’s authority over the state and over every citizen. This commandment is a test of loyalty. You might think it is silly for me to cut pages out of my books that have images of Jesus, but it is a test of loyalty. We will see many other implications of this commandment later in the book, but the bottom line is that any devotion to God needs to follow Scriptural guidelines.

2. The sanctity of devotion - Rights and Liberties

What about the rights inherent in that commandment? Deuteronomy will show that this commandment upholds the right to worship freely and the right of pastors to receive generous wages for their labors. And I’ll skip over some of the other rights that flow from the second commandment.

C. Commandment Three (v. 11) is expanded in 14:1-29

1. The sanctity of God’s name - Duties

The third commandment deals with the sanctity of God’s name and reputation. It says, “You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain, for the LORD will not hold him guiltless who takes His name in vain.” Taking God’s name in vain does not just involve

cussing. It also involves misrepresenting God's name with our bad testimony. After all, by calling ourselves *Christians*, we are wearing Christ's name, and if our public testimony reflects the world's wisdom more than Christ's wisdom, we are taking His name in vain. This is why the Prolife movement in Nebraska needs to repent when it calls compromised bills (like the previous Initiative 434) good bills that Christians must support. That bill constitutionalized most abortions, while pretending to make progress by restricting a few. But they took God's name in vain by putting God behind that bill. It was blasphemy. And I'm not exaggerating. The language in our Constitution now protects moms who murder their babies with a high hand (giving the finger, so to speak to any who oppose the murder) and it actually protects abortionists - *all because Christian proliferers supported it*. By doing so, they were wearing God's name in vain. And this verse indicates that *God will not hold them guiltless*.

In the exposition of this commandment, chapter 14 will say that it also means that when you fail to tithe (in other words, give 10% of your income to the church), and when we fail to support ministers who represent God in the church, you are taking God's name in vain. And there are other implications in church and in society that God draws out in later chapters.

2. The sanctity of God's name - Rights and Liberties

What about the *rights* inherent in the third commandment? God's exposition shows how countries that uphold the sanctity of God's name tend to also have the right to eat and relax. It gives certain clergy rights. I won't take the time to prove those this morning - just letting you know what to anticipate.

D. Commandment Four (vv. 12-15) is expanded in 15:1-16:17

1. The sanctity of time and dominion - Duties

The fourth commandment deals with the sanctity of time and dominion. It ensures that we keep a rhythm of rest and work that honors God and can sustain our spirits and the spirits of others as well. And I want you to note how long this commandment is compared to the others. To me this highlights the importance of Sabbath observance. We will see later on in this book that there are both moral *and* ceremonial aspects to this commandment. For example, the sabbath was at the *end* of the week in the Old Covenant to point *forward* to Christ's Resurrection Day as providing for their salvation rest *in their future*. The New Covenant turns that ceremonial aspect around and *starts* its week with a sabbath to point *back* to a Resurrection Day that has *already* happened. Just as Adam and Eve were supposed to rest in God's finished work by *starting* their week on God's *seventh* day, we are supposed to rest in Christ's finished work of salvation by *starting* our week on *Resurrection Day*. Both the Old Covenant Sabbath and the New Covenant Sabbath point to the same day (Resurrection Day), but from different vantage points. And to celebrate the Sabbath on the seventh day is to deny that Christ's Resurrection has already happened. And the New Testament is quite clear in a number of passages that the Old Covenant form of the Sabbath days is no longer binding. The *sabbath* is binding as a moral precept, but not the ceremonial

Old Covenant form. Anyway, let me read the commandment from the Old Covenant perspective, beginning at verse 13.

13 Observe the Sabbath day, to keep it holy, as the LORD your God commanded you. 13 Six days you shall labor and do all your work, 14 but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the LORD your God. In it you shall do no work: you, nor your son, nor your daughter, nor your male servant, nor your female servant, nor your ox, nor your donkey, nor any of your cattle, nor your stranger who is within your gates, that your male servant and your female servant may rest as well as you. 15 And remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the LORD your God brought you out from there by a mighty hand and by an outstretched arm; therefore the LORD your God commanded you to keep the Sabbath day.

Israel had no rest when they were slaves in Egypt, so there is a sense in which the Sabbath was a built-in rebuke and protest against Pharaoh's economics. Pharaoh demanded endless production, whereas God wanted His people to trust Him with their future by resting. And it takes faith to not work on the Sabbath and to believe that God will still bless us economically when we do so. But there are many other applications of this commandment later on in the book. *Burnout* is often a form of practical unbelief that happens to those who can't trust God's provisions enough to rest on the Sabbath. Christ Himself told the apostles to come aside and rest for awhile. And God's later exposition in chapters 15-16 will show that God wanted Israelites to also take vacations. Isn't that cool that God commands us to take vacations? So its not just about the Sabbath Day. God also wants rich people to give to the poor so that *they* could take vacations. He wants us to treat the land well, to treat our employees well, and in other ways seek to promote a cycle of rest and work that honors God. It shows that God cares about our welfare. He wants us to flourish. So those are the duties.

2. The sanctity of time and dominion - Rights and liberties

But God's exposition shows that this law guarantees rights of labor and of rest, rights of the poor to receive charity, and rights of indentured servants to be treated properly.

E. Commandment Five (v. 16) is expanded in 16:18-18:22

1. The sanctity of authority structures — Duties

The fifth commandment deals with the sanctity of authority structures. It says, "Honor your father and your mother, as the LORD your God has commanded you, that your days may be long, and that it may be well with you in the land which the LORD your God is giving you." All authority is derived from God, and fathers and mothers who defy God's authority begin to lose their own authority. And the longterm disaster that happens to rebellious children when they grow up is a well-documented phenomenon. Again, each one of these commandments was intended for our flourishing and our true liberty, not to weigh us down and bring bondage.

Does this commandment only relate to the nuclear family? No. God's exposition of this in chapter 16:18-18:22 shows that all *God*-ordained authority structures need to be honored

if God is to bless us. It mentions judges, elders, kings, employers, and ministers in the church. It's the sanctity of *all* authority structures that God has established. But it *begins* with the nuclear family - which is the seedbed of the kingdom. When children are not disciplined and instructed in how to honor their parents, such despising of authority will eventually transfer into the rest of society. Family authority is the seedbed of respecting all other legitimate domains of authority. And if you kids don't learn submission now, don't expect your jobs and future marriages to go well. And, by the way, this is why Gary and I keep emphasizing that you fathers are pastors of your families and need to improve your pastoring or shepherding skills. This is why we mentor and disciple and train all twenty year old males and older in leadership skills. As goes the family, so goes the rest of society.

2. The sanctity of authority structures — Rights and Liberties

But the fifth commandment also confers some rights related to civil justice, rights of citizens to *limit* a king's authority, and rights of pastors. And we don't have time to go into all of that.

F. Commandment Six (v. 17) is expanded in 19:1-22:12

1. The sanctity of life — Duties

The sixth commandment deals with the sanctity of life. It says, "You shall not murder." That's pretty easy, right? Well, the later exposition of this commandment will extend the concept of murder to hatred of your brother, failure to love your neighbor as yourself, having a heart that is fixated on bitterness and vengeance rather than mercy, failing to honor property boundaries, being a false witness, engaging in ungodly wars and expansionism, and failing to treat captives in a humane way. This command stretches from abortion to euthanasia; from personal violence to unjust war. Men and women are made in God's image and God expects us to treat them with dignity.

2. The sanctity of life - Rights and Liberties

But in addition to the right to life (a very foundational right), some of the other rights conferred by the sixth commandment include the right to a jury trial, the right to property boundaries, the right to cross-examine witnesses, the right to conscientious objection to being drafted into an ungodly war, the rights of slaves to be treated properly, rights of wives, firstborn, and the right to avoid excessive punishment (21:22-23). It also mentions the right to have lost property returned to you and the right to safety in construction. In other words, the right to life involves avoiding anything that might endanger life or take away the dignity of life.

G. Commandment Seven (v. 18) is expanded in 22:13-23:14

1. The sanctity of love — Duties

The seventh commandment deals with the sanctity of love. It's pretty simple. It says, "You shall not commit adultery." According to the Bible, this commandment covers what we look at with our eyes, what we imagine in our thoughts, as well as more obvious outward acts. It

covers how a man and woman should engage in courtship as well as their conduct within marriage. It covers divorce and remarriage. And since later chapters show that marriage vows cover issues of financial support, submission, nurture, and other issues within the family, sins in those areas often come under this commandment as well. As we will see in later chapters, adultery destabilizes inheritance, identity, and generational trust. When societies trivialize the sacred boundaries of marriage (like America has) it is only a matter of time before many *other* cultural boundaries crumble.

2. The sanctity of love - Rights and Liberties

But the seventh commandment also gives rights. For example, it gives limited sexual rights to men and women. Women should not be treated as sex-objects, and both men *and women* have sexual rights within marriage. It's not just the men; women have sexual rights too. But God's exposition also protects women from unclean perversions that routinely happen in many American marriages. And I'll have to figure out how to tactfully talk about those when we get to that chapter.

H. Commandment Eight (v. 19) is expanded in 23:15-24:22

1. The sanctity of ownership - Duties

The eighth commandment deals with the sanctity of ownership. It says, "You shall not steal." And later chapters will show that sex outside of marriage steals from your future spouse or your current spouse. Those chapters also show that this commandment prohibits charging interest on food or other loans needed for survival. Business loans are fine, but consumer loans for basics of life are a very bad idea. Failing to keep your promises is a form of theft, as is unjustified divorce. And there are many other forms of theft that God in later chapters will put under this commandment. Theft assumes scarcity; biblical stewardship assumes God's abundance. When we keep God's commandments (sometimes at considerable cost to us), God blesses our faith richly.

But this command was not just intended to put guardrails on individuals. It was also intended to prohibit *institutionalized* theft and plunder - like the welfare system, our ungodly tax system, the state taking your property via eminent domain, property taxation, civil asset forfeiture, inflationary policies, cronyism, big corporations being in bed with the civil government in order to take advantage of citizens, zoning and land-use restrictions, government subsidies and bailouts, government enforced monopolies, weaponized lawsuits, inheritance tax, government schools, loss of privacy through data and surveillance extraction, and many other things that are common in America. Deuteronomy will show that violation of this commandment is rife in America. Hopefully you are seeing that our nation has *indeed* thrown off God's guardrails and needs to get back to Biblical law.

2. The sanctity of ownership - Rights and Liberties

What are some of the rights and liberties inherent in the eighth commandment? According to Deuteronomy, it gives the right to contract law, rights related to divorce, rights related to newlyweds, rights against loan sharks taking too much interest, rights related to protection from the spread of diseases, the right to privacy in your home (24:10-13), rights of hired

labor from being oppressed, and a variety of other rights related to justice, poverty, and charity. It's not just about duties. These laws give *rights* that are necessary for a society to really flourish.

I. Commandment Nine (v. 20) is expanded in 25:1-19

1. The sanctity of truth - Duties

The ninth commandment deals with the sanctity of truth. It says, "You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor." Just as a courtroom without truth collapses, so does a culture. When you repost allegations against another person without confirming the facts, you have violated this commandment. And people have sometimes responded to me that though they don't have concrete evidence, "Where there's smoke, there's fire." But that's ambiguous; there could be many reasons for the smoke, and Christians absolutely should not be re-posting accusations being made in the blogosphere without confirming evidence. There are way too many trials-by-thread - and I might add, trials that violate courtroom laws related to evidence. Some of these so-called conspiracy-busters will crop off part of a sentence someone has said and take it out of context, and in the process completely reverse the meaning that the person had intended. Spreading hearsay as a prayer request is another violation of this commandment. God wants us to protect the reputations of people unless they have ruined that reputation themselves. Character assassination by innuendo is rife in social media, and God is not pleased. And in our world of AI that is able to make people say things they didn't say and do things they didn't do, we need to exercise special vigilance with regard to this commandment.

2. The sanctity of truth — Rights and Liberties

What rights and liberties are implied in this commandment? Believe it or not, God gives limited rights to *animals* in His exposition of this commandment. Yes, to *animals*. And I won't get into that today, but animal abuse is ungodly. This commandment also gives inheritance rights, and rights against mutilation in a strange law that punishes a woman for emasculating a man during an unfair fight.

J. Commandment Ten (v. 21) is expanded in 26:1-19

1. The sanctity of contentment — Duties

The tenth commandment deals with the sanctity of contentment. It says, "You shall not covet your neighbor's wife; and you shall not desire your neighbor's house, his field, his male servant, his female servant, his ox, his donkey, or anything that is your neighbor's." This commandment reaches where no human court can reach - into the heart. But *God* sees into the heart and He knows when we covet things that belong to others. All porn is a form of coveting. But so is discontentment with our house, our job, our salary, and coveting another person's house, job, or salary. The later exposition of this commandment will clarify that this does not mean that we cannot rejoice when God blesses us with ever-increasing flocks, better homes, or in other ways flourishes us more than other people. You don't need to feel guilty about wealth or other blessings that others do not have. God loves to flourish our dominion when we keep His guardrails. He does! But this commandment is

saying that discontentment and covetousness is dangerous. Coveting is the root of theft, adultery, violence, and idolatry. 2 Peter 2:18 shows how the world seeks to lure Christians back into sin, and verse 19 concludes, "While they promise them liberty, they themselves are slaves of corruption; for by whom a person is overcome, by him also he is brought into bondage." The world's liberty is a false liberty. It always leads to bondage. And often covetousness is at the root of it. Socialism would not exist without covetousness.

2. The sanctity of contentment - Rights and Liberties

And the tenth commandment gives rights related to harvest, rest, and tithes. I hope that my future exposition of the later chapters will adequately capture the beauty of God's law and why David and other authors said that they loved God's law and delighted in the wisdom of God displayed in those laws.

K. These ten commandments also point us to Jesus, the perfect Law-Keeper, and the foundation for liberty

But the next part of your outline shows how these ten commandments also point us to Jesus. He is the only perfect Law-Keeper. And as has already been shown, our inability to perfectly keep God's law makes us realize our need for Christ and leads us to put our faith in Christ. As Galatians 3 words it,

Gal. 3:22 But the Scripture has confined all under sin, that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe. 23 But before faith came, we were kept under guard by the law, kept for the faith which would afterward be revealed. 24 Therefore the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith.

This means that the law does not merely restrain sin; it reveals a Person - the Person of Jesus. This outline will *barely* introduce you to the ways that Jesus perfectly kept God's laws despite temptations from Satan to take a shortcut around the law.

1. He worshiped the Father alone — Temptation in the wilderness (Matt. 4)

In the wilderness in Matthew 4, Satan repeatedly tempted Jesus. One of his temptations was that if Jesus simply bowed down and worshiped him Satan would give Him all the nations of the world. Wow! That temptation was a major shortcut to God's *longer and much more difficult* requirements for inheritance! But Jesus trusted the Father and worshiped the Father alone. Matthew 4 says,

Matt. 4:8 Again, the devil took Him up on an exceedingly high mountain, and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. 9 And he said to Him, "All these things I will give You if You will fall down and worship me." 10 Then Jesus said to him, "Away with you, Satan! For it is written, 'You shall worship the LORD your God, and Him only you shall serve.'"

Jesus kept the first commandment.

2. He rejected all idols — No shortcuts to the crown

And in that same passage, he knew that giving His all (even unto death) would result in the Father giving Him all nations. Satan offered him a shortcut without pain or sacrifice. But Jesus rejected treating things and nations as idols. There were no shortcuts to obtaining His crown.

3. He honored the Father's name — "I have glorified You on earth"

Third, He fully honored the Father's *name* throughout His life. He was able to truthfully say, "I have glorified You on earth. I have finished the work which You have given Me to do." And because Jesus was consumed with the Father's glory, the Father glorified His Son. But Jesus was tested for thirty-three and a half years first.

4. He lived in perfect Sabbath rest — "The Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath"

Next, Jesus declared, "The Son of Man is also Lord of the Sabbath." But even though He was *Lord* of the Sabbath, He still perfectly *kept* the Sabbath rest and encouraged His disciples to rest. Because of His perfect law-keeping He was able to *become* a Sabbath rest for His people. Jesus had the perfect balance of dominion and rest.

5. He submitted to lawful earthly authorities — Pilate had no power but what was given

Fifth, Luke 2:51 says about the boy Jesus, "He went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was subject to them." Think about that! Jesus was subject to His earthly parents! That's an amazing statement - that the One who created the Universe became subject to imperfect human parents. And you children who think your submission to unreasonable parents is too much to bear, consider how the Perfect One submitted to imperfect parents. Jesus was way wiser than His parents were; yet He submitted. He was more righteous than His parents were; yet He submitted. Indeed, Jesus submitted to *all* lawful earthly authorities and modeled in that same passage that all lawful authority comes from the Father. He told His parents, "Did you not know that I must be about My Father's business?" He knew which calls to submission were lawful and which calls to submission were not. If His parents had told him to steal, he would have had to have disobeyed. When a call to submission explicitly contradicted His Heavenly Father's call upon His life, he was willing to disobey human authority - including civil authority. For example, He refused to leave an area when Herod told Him to do so. Herod's command was not a lawful command. Jesus ignored Rome's command to disarm citizens. If an amendment had not exempted homeschoolers last week, Jesus would have called parents to ignore the previous bill's call for parents to have their homeschooling overseen by the state and completely regulated by the state. State regulation of education is not lawful according to the Bible. Period. All civil authority is derived from God, and Jesus is the perfect model of how to navigate authority structures in life. Any time there were lawful commands from civil and religious authorities, Jesus kept them. And He insisted that we too must submit to lawful authority. But we only know what is lawful and unlawful from the Bible.

6. He cherished life — Healing, restoring, raising the dead

In keeping with the sixth commandment, He cherished life, and raised people from the dead, healed the sick, and restored those who were demon-possessed. Most of His ministry was reversing the curse of both spiritual and physical death.

7. He was faithful to His bride, the church — Laid down His life for her

What about the seventh commandment? Though it would not have been proper for Jesus to have married a woman, since that would spoil the imagery that He would be married to the church, He modeled the seventh commandment by means of maintaining sexual purity throughout His life. How do I know that? Several Scriptures indicate this, but Hebrews 4:15 is quite clear on this. It says, “For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was *in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin.*” If He was in *all points tempted as we are*, He was tempted sexually - yet He perfectly kept God’s law. Keep that in mind when you believe you can’t help it. And He was also symbolically faithful to His bride, the church, and laid down His life for her. And it is by Christ’s grace that Paul says that singles can stay pure and married couples can flourish in their marriages. My *Overcoming Masturbation and Impure Thoughts* book² gives you practical steps for maintaining the same purity. It *can* be done.

8. He stewarded all things without theft — Owned nothing, owed nothing

Next, Jesus stewarded all things that the Father put into His hands without stealing. Though as God He had created all things, He left Heaven, became a poor man, and gave up all things so that He could purchase all for His bride. He owned nothing (but saw everything as belonging to the Father) and He owed no man anything. In 2 Corinthians 8:9 Paul said, “For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich.” Those are just a few of many examples of how Jesus kept this commandment.

9. He bore true witness — “For this I came... to testify to the truth”

He kept the ninth commandment throughout His life. As a true prophet, He testified to truth. In John 14:6 He said, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.” Ephesians 4:21 says, “The truth is in Jesus.” Though Satan no doubt tempted Jesus to *soften* the truth in order to avoid criticism from man, He valued God’s opinion more than man’s.

² The OMIT book: *Overcoming Masturbation and Impure Thoughts* can be found here: <https://store.biblicalblueprints.com/products/overcoming-masturbation-and-impure-thoughts?variant=47043952738600>

10. He coveted nothing — Even the kingdoms of the world could not tempt Him

And Jesus coveted *nothing* in this world. Even the kingdoms of the world that Satan offered to Him were not tempting to Him. And of course, Satan tried other ways to tempt Jesus to covet. And the New Testament shows that Satan failed miserably.

The point is that Jesus did not come to abolish the law, but to fulfill it, to embody it, to model it to us, and to then write the law on our hearts by His grace. If you love Christ, you too will come to love the law that Christ loved.

IV. God speaks these laws for our good (v. 22)

Moving on to verse 22. Moses ended His giving of the Ten Commandments by saying, “These words the LORD spoke to all your assembly, in the mountain from the midst of the fire, the cloud, and the thick darkness, with a loud voice; and He added no more. And He wrote them on two tablets of stone and gave them to me.”

A. God spoke the Ten Commandments to all directly (v. 22a)

This is a nice summary of how and why God gave the Ten Commandments. First, whereas the rest of God’s law code was given via a mediator (Moses), the Ten Commandments were spoken out loud from heaven by God through a loud voice coming out of His visible theophany of fire, and cloud, and thick darkness. They were spoken *directly* to Israel, and verses 23 and following indicate that they were terrified when they saw the theophany and heard the loud voice. I don’t often quote Warren Wiersbe, but I thought his comments on God’s direct speech from the midst of the dark cloud and fire were worth reading in their entirety. He said,

The purpose of the law of God is to reveal the God of the law, and when you focus on Him, you find it a delight to obey His commands (Ps. 40:8). Moses closed his review of the Ten Commandments by reminding the new generation that at Sinai God revealed His glory and His greatness. The God of Israel is not to be trifled with because He is a holy God. Israel would never again go to Sinai and see the fire, the cloud, the darkness, and the lightning, and hear the awesome voice of God speak from the mountain; but they needed to remember the majesty of their God and the authority of His Word.

Many churches today have lost the biblical concept of the majesty and authority of God as expressed in His law. This deficiency has cheapened our worship, turned evangelism into religious salesmanship, and converted the Bible into a self-help book that’s guaranteed to make you a success.³

³ Warren W. Wiersbe, *Be Equipped, “Be” Commentary Series* (Colorado Springs, CO: Chariot Victor Pub., 1999), 39–40.

In contrast, we see that the people feared not because God was cruel, but because holiness exposes sin—and yet God spoke anyway. He spoke because He loves His people.

B. He spoke nothing more to them (v. 22b)

The second part of verse 22 shows that God spoke nothing more to Israel. From this point on God would only communicate His Words through His prophet, Moses. But Moses is emphasizing that the ten commandments were spoken by God's voice *directly* to Israel to show the high importance of the ten commandments. They are the *essence* of the law. Every moral law is found in seed form in these ten commandments.

C. He wrote them on two tablets of stone (v. 22c)

And writing them on stone tablets symbolically shows the enduring nature of God's law. Generally, the Presbyterian view is that the two tablets of stone were divided up into four commandments on one and six on the other. Commandments one through four focus especially on loving God and commandments six through ten focus especially on loving our neighbor, though there is obviously overlap when using the summary word love. Of course, not everyone agrees with that division of four and six. There are other divisions that Lutherans and Roman Catholics have more recently had (I think in order to avoid the charge of idolatry with their icons). There is also, interestingly, a view that all ten commandments were written on each tablet as a double witness.⁴ I don't agree with that view. But the division is not as critical as the fact that they were permanently engraved in stone and kept in the ark of the covenant as a witness.

D. All the rest of God's law code was given by God through a mediator, Moses (vv. 23ff)

And then the rest of the verses in chapter 5 explain why all the rest of the law was going to be given by God through a mediator, Moses.

But I want to end this sermon by reiterating that God's law was not tyranny; it was love structured for blessing. Think of a father who sets boundaries to keep his toddler safe. The toddler might not think that the boundary of staying away from the fireplace is a fair boundary because he doesn't know better. But as he matures, the child realizes that his

⁴ Some modern scholars claim that Moses was borrowing from Near Eastern treaty procedures, which had duplicates of the treaty written in two documents that were identical, with the leaders of each group making the treaty being given a copy. But there are multiple problems with this view. First, Moses was quite clear that he didn't borrow anything from the pagans, but that God revealed everything. There is no hint whatsoever that pagans invented the idea of two tablets. Second, if it was borrowing from Near Eastern treaty procedures (like Meredith Kline thinks), then the *people* should have been given one tablet and *God* should have kept the other. But the fact of the matter is that *both* tablets were stored in the ark of the covenant before God as a witness (Exod. 25:16, 21; 40:20; Deut. 10:1-5; 1 Kgs 8:9; 2 Chr. 5:10).

parents were not being hateful; they were being protective. To set no boundaries for your children would be negligent. Four times in Deuteronomy God admonishes adherence to His law “that it may go well with you” (Deut. 4:40; 12:25,28; 19:13). I love that phrase - “that it may go well with you.” The law was given for our good. The same God who brought Israel out of Egypt and into liberty, says in Galatians 5:13 that He brought us out of sin and into liberty. But then Paul quickly clarifies that true liberty is not casting off God’s commands, but living more and more consistently with a holy God as a holy people whom He has redeemed, restored, and guided by grace. May each of us come to appreciate God’s laws more and more. Amen.