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Exodus: Delivered By God, For God / Word of God; Jesus / Exodus 31:18; 2 Corinthians 3

In this message we saw how the giving of the tablets of stone at Sinai testified to God's holiness, His will, and His covenant with His people. Written by the "finger of God," they revealed both the perfection of His law and the sinfulness of man, pointing us forward to Christ, the Word made flesh. In Him, the veil is removed, hearts of stone are replaced with hearts of flesh, and God's law is written anew within us. The law drives us to Christ, who fulfilled it perfectly, that we might have life in Him, the true Light of the world.

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## Introduction

### **John 1:1-5 LSB**

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

He was in the beginning with God.

All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being.

In Him was life, and the life was the Light of men.

And the Light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overtake it.

### **John 1:14 LSB**

And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth.

These are the words that John chose to open up his gospel account. As he tells us later he wrote his gospel with the purpose that we may know and believe in the Lord Jesus. The word that we translate here into the English is the Greek word *logos*. While this is quite a literal translation there is an underlying meaning in this word that we would typically miss in the modern world. The first known concept of *logos* came from a philosopher named Heraclitus born a little over 500 years before Christ. Heraclitus described the concept of *logos* as a fundamental law of the cosmos, a

principal that brought order and form to all things. Hellenistic Greeks saw it as “the bond of everything, holding all things together and binding all the parts, and prevents them from being dissolved and separated”. John was pointing to the truth that it is the Word, whom he identifies in his gospel as Jesus, that holds all things together. Paul would later write in Colossians 1:17 “And He is before all things, And in Him all things hold together.”

In Exodus 24:12 “Now Yahweh said to Moses, “Come up to Me on the mountain and remain there, and I will give you the stone tablets with the law and the commandment which I have written for their instruction.”” Once Moses ascended the mountain to commune with God, he remained there for 40 day and 40 nights. Our text for this morning comes at the completion of that 40 day time period. Over the last several months we have taken a deep look into those things which God told Moses upon the top of Mount Sinai. We have seen the giving of the instructions regarding the tabernacle, the priesthood, the building of the furniture and implements for the tabernacle. We have also seen God telling Moses how the law was to be used by His people for His glory and for their good. All of these things have taken place against the backdrop of the giving of the Law of God to Moses for the people of God. The completion of what began with the words from chapter 24.

Cecil B DeMille, the famous director of the movie “The Ten Commandments” both the 1923 version and his more famous 1956 remake, once quipped “Man has made 32 million laws since the **Commandments** were handed down to **Moses** on Mount Sinai... but he has never improved on God's law.” To which I add, and he never will. It is simply not possible to improve upon perfection, and God’s law, God’s Word is perfection.

Our text for this morning comes from the final verse in chapter 31. In addition to this verse I will also read verses 15-16 of Chapter 32 as an emphasis on what is stated in verse 18. Although this is a short passage, it still contains truth for us this morning, both in what it teaches us about God’s written Word and what it points forward to in the Incarnate Word. Please open your bibles, if you have not already and make your way to Exodus chapter 31 and having turned there...

# Text

Please stand for the reading of God's Holy, Inerrant, Infallible, Authoritative, Complete and Sufficient Word

## **Exodus 31:18 LSB**

When He had finished speaking with him upon Mount Sinai, He gave Moses the two tablets of the testimony, tablets of stone, written by the finger of God.

## **Exodus 32:15–16 LSB**

Then Moses turned and went down from the mountain. And the two tablets of the testimony were in his hand, tablets which were written on both sides; they were written on one *side* and the other.

Now the tablets were the work of God, and the writing was the writing of God engraved on the tablets.

Our prayer is adapted from "The Valley of Vision: Christ the Word":

Our great, merciful and heavenly Father, in a world of created, changeable things, we are thankful that Christ and Your written word are immutable and can never be shaken. Father, grant us strength to forsake all created things, to rest on Christ as stone on a sure foundation, to abide in Him and be held up by Him! We know that all of our mercies come through Christ, who has designed them, purchased them, promised them, and effected them. Oh how sweet to draw near to Him, the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world, to be filled with holy affections for Christ alone. When we sin against You, O Lord, we have crossed Your will, Your love, Your life and have nowhere to turn, no creature in which to find comfort. Our sins are not so much a particular evil but rather a continual separation, disunion, and disunion from You and an attitude of apathy towards You. Father, even in our sinful state You have given us the greatest gift in Christ Jesus, Your Son, to serve as mediator between You and us, spanning the chasm created by our sin, and satisfying Your divine justice. May we always lay hold of this Mediator as a realized object of faith, worthy only through His love to cross that bridge into Your Holy presence. Remind us of how precious He is by the Word, grant us greater faith in Him by Your Word. We know that if we oppose the Word, we oppose our Lord when He is closest. If we receive Your Word we also receive our Lord and draw closer to Him in

all things. Father, You who have the hearts of all men in Your hand, form our hearts according to Your Word, according to the image of Your Son, so shall Christ the Word, and His Word by our strength and our comfort. These things we ask in the blessed name of the Lord Jesus, Amen.

## Beginning, Middle, End

Our text for this morning picks up the historical narrative where it left off in Exodus 24:18 "Then Moses entered the midst of the cloud as he went up to the mountain; and Moses was on the mountain forty days and forty nights." The very next words that we find in Exodus 25:1 begin with God speaking directly to Moses and giving him the instructions regarding the tabernacle. You may recall that in those instructions we talked about how the center of the entire compound was the Holy of Holies, the place where the ark of the covenant or the ark of the testimony was to be placed. The ark was called such because of God's command to Moses in Exodus 25:21 "... and in the ark you shall put the testimony which I will give to you." From the outset of these instructions God was displaying the centrality of His Word among His people, defining for them, and for us, exactly how they should view His word.

As I have said before, and will certainly say again, here at Christ Reformed Baptist the expectation is that we not just give lip service to the fact that the Word of God is central to our lives but that we whole heartedly believe this and pursue our study of scripture in light of this reality, that it is truly God's Word and that it is truly all we need for life and godliness. For 30 years AW Pink edited a monthly magazine entitled "Studies in the Scripture" and during that time he wrote a series of articles that spoke of how the believer was to profit from the Word, later these were compiled into a book entitled "Profiting from the Word". Pink writes:

"The Holy Scriptures are wholly supernatural. They are a Divine revelation. "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God'. It is not merely that God elevated men's minds, but that He directed their thoughts. It is not simply that He communicated concepts to them, but that He dictated the very words that they used. "The prophecy came not in old time by the will of man; but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit... The Divine image is stamped upon every page. Writings so holy, so heavenly, so awe-inspiring, could not have been

created by man." - AW Pink, *Profiting from the Word*, Banner of Truth Trust, 1970

In between being called up onto the mountain and coming down from the mountain we see that Moses has been given much instruction, but that instruction began with the law of God and so it is fitting that this verse opens with the statement "When He had finished speaking". It was a testament to the perpetual nature of these words that God engraved them on stone, set them down in a permanent manner so that the people could be reminded always of His commands.

## Heart, Stone, Heart

In his commentary on this verse, Matthew Henry noted:

**Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible: Complete and Unabridged in One Volume** [Exodus 31:12-18](#)

The law was written in tables of stone, [...] to denote [...] the hardness of our hearts; one might more easily write in stone than write any thing that is good in our corrupt and sinful hearts.

This statement should give us pause and cause us to reflect not just on what has happened in the last 40 days and nights that Moses has dwelt on the Mountain, but further back, the very foundation of creation. It was then, at the very beginning, as God created man and woman that He originally wrote His law on their hearts. We see this reflected in the command that God gave Adam regarding the Garden. In Genesis 2:8-9 "And Yahweh God planted a garden in Eden, toward the east; and there He placed the man whom He had formed. And out of the ground Yahweh God caused to grow every tree that is desirable in appearance and good for food; the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil." and further in Genesis 2:16-17 "And Yahweh God commanded the man, saying, "From any tree of the garden you may surely eat; but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, you shall not eat from it; for in the day that you eat from it you will surely die.""

Most people read this and respond, much as they do today when they read God's word or think about God's actions, "How dare God set a limitation on Adam and Eve?", focusing in on the negative versus realizing that God has seen to all of the needs of His people. When asked what commandment

was the greatest, Jesus replied "Love the Lord your God with all you heart, might, soul and strength" This is not a new law, this does not replace the law that was written on the tablets by the very "finger of God" but it does remind us that in the very beginning, God wrote this law on our hearts, this law that sums up all the commands that are given. The truth that God did love His people so that in He set them in the Garden, gave them all that they could truly ever need or desire, and because of Adam's disobedience, the heart that had so lovingly been crafted and engraved by God became corrupt, the engraving became incomprehensible and foolishness to all of humanity. The stones then were engraved so that the statutes could be recalled from generation to generation.

Later, God promised His people that there would be a transformation that would take remove that corrupted, hardened heart and replace it with one of flesh. Ezekiel prophesied in Ezekiel 36:26 ""Moreover, I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh." It is this heart of flesh that Jeremiah speaks of when he writes these words in Jeremiah 31:31-33

### **Jeremiah 31:31–33 LSB**

"Behold, days are coming," declares Yahweh, "when I will cut a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah,

not like the covenant which I cut with their fathers in the day I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, but I was a husband to them," declares Yahweh.

"But this is the covenant which I will cut with the house of Israel after those days," declares Yahweh: "I will put My law within them, and on their heart I will write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.

It is this new heart, the one that was promised in both Ezekiel and Jeremiah, that we receive by grace through faith in the Lord Jesus. It is there on this new heart that the commands that have been written on the hearts of men since the foundation of the world are once again legible, the corruption that filled in the engraving on our old hearts has been removed and God's law can now be understood by His people once more.

## Two Tablets

As a kid I can recall gathering at the home of one of my Sunday School teachers to watch the movie I referenced earlier, "The Ten Commandments". While this movie is certainly not biblically accurate it does contain scenes that stick in your mind. Vivid imagery that made an impression on a young boy, but none quite so deeply as that moment in the film when Moses, having been on the mount for 40 days, begins to descend with the two stone tablets. One of the theatrical effects that DeMille used during the filming had to do with the changes that occurred in Moses as he encounters God. When he first encounters God at the burning bush his black hair and beard gain streaks of white. This culminates at the end of the film, as Moses descends from Sinai, his hair and beard have become snowy white. As he begins this descent in the movie, Heston carries these two tablets with great care. These two tablets, called the tablets of the testimony, that contain the word of God are called such because they testify to God's people.

In the first place, they testify to God's people regarding God's will. The first four commandments containing the way in which God should be approached and worship. The recognition that there is but one God, that nothing and no one is to come before Him in the hearts and minds of His people. Exodus 20:1-2 "Then God spoke all these words, saying, "I am Yahweh your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery." clarifies exactly who is speaking before beginning to detail out the ways in which God, Yahweh, the one true God, the Author, the Creator, The Sustainer, the Almighty, the eternal, self existing God of all things.

It also testifies to us of how God's good will towards us, giving to us these commands that help us to rightly interact with Himself and with each other. Instructions that we of perfect foundation. The way in which we interact with God, the strength of our relationship with Him, FIRST, will determine the way in which approach others. The understanding that we have towards His law, whether it be understanding of the goodness or focus on that which we perceive as the negative, changes the way in which we act with others. Our standards of life, truth, morality all stem from this point. There are so many people who profess to be Christians yet do not have the proper understanding of the true foundation of all of scripture, that it in fact finds all of its foundation in the law of God and all of its fulfillment in the person of Christ. The words of Christ in the sermon on the mount

begin to take on a much greater weight when we consider the truth behind them. Matthew records these words in Matthew 5:17-20

**Matthew 5:17–20 LSB**

“Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish but to fulfill.

“For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass from the Law until all is accomplished.

“Whoever then annuls one of the least of these commandments, and teaches others *to do* the same, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does and teaches *them*, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.

“For I say to you that unless your righteousness surpasses *that* of the scribes and Pharisees, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven.

Our confession, the 1689 London Baptist Confession speaks to what Jesus teaching here regarding the perpetuity of the moral law when it states in Chapter 19 Paragraph 5:

**Confessing the Faith: The 1689 Baptist Confession for the 21st Century XIX. The Law of God**

The moral law forever requires obedience of everyone, both those who are justified as well as others. This obligation arises not only because of its content but also because of the authority of God the Creator who gave it.<sup>11</sup> Nor does Christ in any way dissolve this obligation in the gospel; instead, He greatly strengthens it.

Sam Waldron summarizes an introductory teaching on this passage with these words:

*What is the underlying theme of this passage? It concerns Jesus' relationship to the Old Testament Scriptures. Those Scriptures are described in the way typical of the New Testament as the law and the prophets. Jesus' relation to them is described both negatively and positively. It is not to abolish but to fulfill them. Jesus comes to bring the Scriptures to their intended goal or predestined destination. - Covenant Baptist Theological Seminary, Blog Post entitled "Jesus Came to Fulfill the Law - What Does that Mean?", dated November 9, 2021*

The fact that Christ is the fulfillment of the this law shows us God's abounding love and good will towards His people in that even when there was not a way for our righteousness to exceed that of the scribes and Pharisees, He provided the Way, in the words of John the Baptist "Behold the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world." who was and is and ever shall be King of Kings and Lord of Lords granting to us by grace through faith His righteousness so that we might be reconciled to the Father.

Lastly these tablets are tablets of testimony in that they testify against the people of God in the event of their disobedience, their (and our) SIN. One of the purposes of the law is to show us how greatly we have fallen and how desperately we are in need of the Savior, not just a savior, there is only one who will suffice, that perfect, spotless, unblemished sacrifice, the Lord Jesus Christ. Last week brother Daniel spoke to you about "Rejoicing in Repentance". There is no repentance without understanding of need and there is no rejoicing without understanding of what has been done and by whom. Ephesians 2:1-9

**Ephesians 2:1-9 LSB**

And you were dead in your transgressions and sins,

in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the ruler of the power of the air, the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience,

among whom we all also formerly conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, doing the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest.

But God, being rich in mercy because of His great love with which He loved us,

even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved—

and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly *places* in Christ Jesus,

so that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.

For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this not of yourselves, *it is* the gift of God;

not of works, so that no one may boast.

## The Finger of God

This is the purpose in the statement "written by the finger of God". This is an anthropomorphic description, a description using human terms to help us with our understanding, and not a statement that God has a physical finger, but that makes it no less the very word of God, wrought by Him. How this occurred is a matter of speculation, that it occurred is a matter of truth. The statement used here has appeared previously in our study of Exodus. During the account of the 10 plagues that God visits on the land of Egypt we find these words: Exodus 8:16-19

### **Exodus 8:16–19 LSB**

Then Yahweh said to Moses, "Say to Aaron, 'Stretch out your staff and strike the dust of the earth, that it may become gnats through all the land of Egypt.'"

And they did so; and Aaron stretched out his hand with his staff and struck the dust of the earth, and there were gnats on man and beast. All the dust of the earth became gnats through all the land of Egypt.

Then the magicians did the same with their secret arts in order to bring forth gnats, but they could not; so there were gnats on man and beast.

And the magicians said to Pharaoh, "This is the finger of God." But Pharaoh's heart was hardened with strength, and he did not listen to them, as Yahweh had spoken.

Recognizing that they could not reproduce this particular plague the magicians recognized that it was the work of Almighty God, ALONE! that it was His power, His might, His will that was on display, nothing of their own.

It should come as no shock to us that we humans tend to think of ourselves as the main character, the one for whom all credit should be given, and usually none of the blame. We see this demonstrated repeatedly in men as our arrogance leads us to the opinion that we are somehow in control, that we can over rule God. In most churches God's Sovereignty is acknowledge, but only in so far as it does not overrule our own sovereignty. We color it in words that demonstrate how God cannot act without our permission, that He cannot come in unless invited, that somehow His unlimited power is limited when it comes to us... Paul, writing to the church at Corinth had this to say to a group of people who were beginning to have this impression of themselves: 2 Corinthians 3:1-6

### **2 Corinthians 3:1-6 LSB**

Are we beginning to commend ourselves again? Or do we need, as some, letters of commendation to you or from you?

You are our letter, having been written in our hearts, known and read by all men,

being manifested that you are a letter of Christ, ministered to by us, having been written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of hearts of flesh.

And such confidence we have through Christ toward God.

Not that we are sufficient in ourselves to consider anything as *coming* from ourselves, but our sufficiency is from God,

who also made us sufficient *as* ministers of a new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.

Take a moment and reflect on that very first question, are we beginning to commend ourselves. Paul has been writing to them regarding the wonderful triumphs that they have had. Just above in chapter 2 of 2 Corinthians he writes: 2 Corinthians 2:14-17 "But thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumphal procession in Christ, and manifests through us the aroma of the knowledge of Him in every place. For we are a fragrance of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing; to the one an aroma from death to death, to the other an

aroma from life to life. And who is sufficient for these things? For we are not like many, peddling the word of God, but as from sincerity, but as from God, in the sight of God, we speak in Christ.”

His point with this first question is that he is not bragging on anything that he has done, but on what God has done through him according to Christ. Notice his words in verse 5 of chapter 3. All of his sufficiency comes, not from himself, but from God, by the Spirit according to the word of the new covenant. The word written not on stones, but on the heart. Notice verses 7 and following: 2 Corinthians 3:7-18

### **2 Corinthians 3:7–18 LSB**

But if the ministry of death, in letters having been engraved on stones, came with glory, so that the sons of Israel could not look intently at the face of Moses because of the glory of his face, which was being brought to an end,

how will the ministry of the Spirit not be even more in glory?

For if the ministry of condemnation has glory, much more does the ministry of righteousness abound in glory.

For indeed what had been glorious, in this case has no glory because of the glory that surpasses *it*.

For if that which was being brought to an end *was* with glory, much more that which remains *is* in glory.

Therefore having such a hope, we use great boldness,

and *are* not like Moses, *who* used to put a veil over his face so that the sons of Israel would not look intently at the consequence of what was being brought to an end.

But their minds were hardened; for until this very day at the reading of the old covenant the same veil remains unlifted, because it is brought to an end in Christ.

But to this day whenever Moses is read, a veil lies over their heart,

but WHENEVER a person TURNS TO THE LORD, THE VEIL IS TAKEN AWAY.

Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, *there* is freedom.

But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit.

Pay specific attention to verse 7 and then 15-18 - notice how the "ministry of death" was engraved in stones but still came with glory as contrasted to what happens when the veil is removed from the heart, a new heart is given on on that heart is written the perfect Word of God.

## Conclusion

As we bring our thoughts together, we are reminded that the Word of God is not merely words on a page or relics carved into stone, but the living testimony of the Almighty written by His own hand. From the very beginning, God inscribed His law on the hearts of Adam and Eve, and though sin marred that engraving, His Word remained sure and steadfast. The tablets given to Moses were more than just commandments—they were testimonies of God's holiness, His will, and His covenant with His people. They testified to His righteousness, exposed the depth of man's sin, and pointed forward to the Incarnate Word, Christ Jesus, who would fulfill every jot and tittle.

We cannot miss the continuity of God's revelation. From Sinai to Calvary, the same truth resounds: God's Word is central, perfect, and enduring. The tablets of stone remind us of our inability to keep the law in our own strength, yet they also magnify the glory of the One who came not to abolish the law but to fulfill it. In Him, the veil is lifted, the heart of stone is replaced with a heart of flesh, and His law is written anew upon our hearts by the Spirit. What the "finger of God" wrote on stone, He now inscribes on our hearts through Christ, producing obedience, faith, and life.

The law, when read rightly, drives us to Christ. It shows us both our sin and our Savior. And the Word, both written and Incarnate, becomes our

foundation, our guide, and our hope. As John declared, "In Him was life, and the life was the Light of men." That Light still shines, and no darkness will overcome it.

So then, dear friends, if the Word of God is indeed central, unshakable, and fulfilled in Christ, what place does it have in your life today? Is it written merely on the pages of a closed Bible, or has it been engraved on the tablet of your heart?

## Closing Prayer

Gracious Father,

We thank You for the power and perfection of Your Word, written by Your very hand and fulfilled in Christ Jesus our Lord. We confess that our hearts, hardened by sin, cannot comprehend or obey apart from the work of Your Spirit. Yet in Your mercy, You have given us new hearts of flesh, hearts upon which You have engraved Your truth and Your promises.

Lord, help us not to treat Your Word lightly or neglect its place in our lives. Teach us to love Your law as our delight and to see in it the glory of Christ, the Word made flesh. May we live each day as those who have been transformed, not by our own sufficiency, but by Your grace that sustains us. Strengthen us to be a testimony in this dark world, that others may behold the Light that shines in us through Christ.

We pray these things in His precious name,  
Amen.