



**The Ten Commandments – Part 2**  
**Exodus 19:3-6**  
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The typical mama eagle will construct a nest approximately 8 foot wide and 8 foot deep. The largest eagle's nest ever discovered was about 9½ foot wide and 20 foot deep, weighing approximately three tons. How they estimated the weight I do not know, but regardless it was big and it was heavy.

The mama eagle will fill the nest with leaves, animal fur, and her own down which she plucks from her breast. It is a very warm and cozy home for her young. But when the time is right she will begin to discard the fur and the down and the leaves to begin making the nest uncomfortable for her unsuspecting eaglets. She will then take them one by one out of the nest and soar to a great height and drop the youngster.

This can be quite a shock to a bird that has never flown before and has known nothing but a life of comfort and ease. The eaglet has been fed regularly in a comfy, snuggled-down, fuzz ball existence up until now; but suddenly finds him or herself hurtling through the sky experiencing the law of gravity for the first time. On the way down they flutter helplessly not knowing what to do.

As the little fella plummets to the earth, contemplating his comfortable but brief existence, mama eagle watches from above. And just before the little guy reaches the ground she swoops underneath and catches him while he goes into cardiac arrest. I can hear him now say, "What in the world was that all about mom? Isn't about lunch time?" But mom climbs to that dizzying height in the heavens and dumps the little guy out once again. And she does it again and again, each time swooping underneath and bearing him up on eagle's wings.

Turn with me in your Bibles to the Book of **Exodus**.

**Exodus 19:3-6**

Let's pray.

God was saying, "Moses, be sure to tell them before they receive the commandments, how much I have loved them. Make sure they know that I have always been hovering over them with a watchful eye every day of their existence. Remind them that I have bore them up on eagle's wings.

What exactly does it mean to be bore up on eagle's wings?

The Lord was saying, "Remember when you were in captivity in Egypt under the harsh rule of Pharaoh? You had no place to go and no means of escape. Do you remember the oppression and the cruelty of the taskmasters that berated you and beat you without cause and without end? Do you recall how hopeless you felt when you gazed into the eyes of your children, knowing they would soon be under the same whips without any semblance of a future beyond chains and an early death?"

*"I loved you then, I heard your cries, I saw your tears, and I came down to deliver you from slavery. Do you remember My children?"*

"Do you remember standing on the shore with the Red Sea lapping at your feet and Pharaoh's army bearing down on you? Do you remember the despair you felt knowing you had no place to turn and death was riding toward you like a storm?"

*"I made a way for you when there was no way. Do you remember My people?"*

"Do you remember those days in the wilderness when there was nothing left to drink, and your throats were dry, and your little ones were begging for water?"

*"I opened up a spring for you in the midst of a desert; a stream of fresh, pure, clean water gushing over the desert floor. Do you remember My loved ones?"*

"Do you remember being hungry in that barren place, with no provision or supplies?"

*"I fed you every day with manna from heaven. Do you remember?"*

"You have faced armies stronger than you, but I fought in your place. You have been up against the wall with no thought of survival, and I delivered. You have reached the point of not knowing which way to turn, and I showed you the way."

*"I swooped down and bore you up on eagle's wings. Do you remember?"*

This is the context of the Ten Commandments. Did the Lord deliver His children out of four hundred years of slavery just to browbeat them now in the wilderness? Have you ever taken the time to realize just how much the Lord loved and cared for them?

God loved them so much that He took the time to write the most profound love letter of all time; a reminder of His eternal love. And He wrote it with His own hand.

Maybe you have never viewed the Ten Commandments in this way. Maybe you have always taken them to be ten chains that confine you, and slow you down, and restrict you, and steal all your fun. But the truth is they are a love letter that leads you to a life of joy and blessing. They are not a lock and chain, but the key that sets you free. They aren't confinement and restriction, but deliverance, and release, and protection, and provision!

We can look back and see the same thing in our lives, can't we? Everything we have and everything we enjoy are because of the Lord and the blessings we have received from His hand. We too were without hope and heading nowhere – and isn't it neat to consider that the word "nowhere" can just as easily say "now here" if you insert a simple space.

The Apostle Paul says in **Ephesians 2:12**, **"Remember that you were at that time separate from Christ, excluded from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world."**

It was at that point that Jesus swooped down, caught us on His wings, and gave us everything. And now he sustains us and keeps us and watches over us every day.

There obviously are times in which we feel abandoned like an eaglet hurtling to the ground in the wide empty sky, but the Lord always comes and He always will come. If you trust Him and put your faith in Him He promises to always show up; He has promised that He will never leave you nor forsake you, and He will always be there at exactly the right time. If it seems as if He is late from your perspective it is only because He is allowing you to see something or learn something that you need to see and learn.

Just like Mary and Martha who were complaining about Jesus showing up at their home four days after their brother Lazarus had died. "Lord, if you could have only been here to heal him four days ago." By all accounts it looked as if the Lord was late. But Mary and Martha already knew about the healing power of Jesus; they already knew Him as Jehovah-Rapha, the Lord who heals. But they didn't know Him as the Lord who has power over death. So while they thought Jesus was too late, He was exactly on time for them to see and learn something brand new.

And that's the way it is with us. We would all like for our earthly existence to be warm and cozy, but what good is an eagle that cannot soar through the heavens? And how can you learn to soar if your life is spent snuggled up in a comfortable nest?

In their fishing boat out on the stormy sea, the disciples thought they were going to die. They didn't see any way of escape and they had all but lost hope of survival. But Jesus showed up at just the right time, walking on top of the water. He wouldn't have waited any longer and He wouldn't have arrived any earlier.

Of course the disciples would have loved to have had Jesus there earlier. They would have loved to have Him be there at the sight of the first storm cloud approaching off in the distance. They would have loved for Jesus to be with them as the first wave came crashing over the side of the boat. But they would not have known Jesus as the Lord of the storm; the Master of the waves and the sea. And Peter would not have known that he could walk on water, in essence actually do anything, as long as his eyes were fixed on Jesus.

Would Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego have preferred that the Lord would have swooped down to deliver them before they were seized, bound, and thrown alive into the fiery furnace? Of course they would have. But then they would have never met the Fourth Man, namely Jesus, who stood with them in the flames and protected them to the point that even the smell of smoke did not soak into their garments.

We don't hear about the rest of the story for Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, but can't you imagine how boldly they must have lived from that point on?

God is all about developing us and helping us grow. But you cannot grow without pain. **James 1:2-4** is expressly clear that we simply cannot grow and mature in our faith apart from trial and tribulation. I love the quote from an old black pastor who preached

in the south many decades ago: "The Lord says His children will face tribulation in this world, so we best be about the business of tribulation'."

That's the attitude. That's looking at hurtling toward the earth, or suffering through the loss of a loved one, or being in the midst of a raging storm, or facing the flames of a fiery furnace, with the understanding and the confidence that the Lord's deliverance is just around the corner.

But all of this is just another expression of the Lord's love for us. And it is His love that pens the commandments to each of us. It is His divine and unconditional love that sets the boundaries for our protection and our blessing. His commands are not burdensome, His yoke is not hard, and if they feel that way to you then you are still too attached to this world; you are still trying to straddle the fence between surrendering your life to Christ and enjoying the pleasures of this world.

Until you fully see and understand that it is God's love for you that put the commandments in place you will not view them in the proper light and with the proper attitude.

Turn with me in your Bibles to the Gospel of **Luke**.

### **Luke 11:9-13**

The point of the parable is that any loving father on earth, even though he is limited in his capacity to love completely and battles his own selfishness and evil tendencies, will give good gifts to his children and always do his best to care for his children. If that is the case with a father who is sinful, how much more good gifts should you expect from your heavenly father who is perfect and sinless and is not limited in His capacity to love fully and completely?

Now I understand that many of you in here did not have an ideal father by any stretch of the imagination. Some may have had fathers who lacked the ability to show his love; some may have had fathers who were uncaring and stiff; some may have had their father abandon them at an early age; and still others may have even had abusive fathers. But that's not God the Father.

I was privileged and blessed to have a wonderful father who loved me and my brother, and always did everything within his power to care for us and give us all that we needed or wanted in life. But while my father's love knew no bounds he was still very limited in what he could do for us, just as everyone of us in here tonight are limited.

God the Father is not limited in any way. His love for you is deeper than the ocean, higher than the heavens, it's broader than the universe, and it is wider than (arms stretched wide as if on the Cross)... And because of this infinite and limitless love the Father has for us He wrote us a letter to show us the best possible way to live our lives.

There are things in this brief life we have on this earth that are so shattering and devastating that God does not desire for us to have to learn from bitter experience. So He has written down some things for us to follow so we can avoid them. God knows there will be times when we will find ourselves in dark places, lonely places, tight spots,

and confusing spots. He knows at times we will be wondering which direction to turn. So He wrote some things down to guide us along the way.

God wants to remove the confusion from your life. God wants to point out all the traps and snares of Satan so we can avoid them. God wants to spare you from the life-sapping effects of sin. God wants you to find your true destiny as his son or daughter.

The world we live in has so blurred the lines between right and wrong, good and evil, moral and immoral, that it is difficult for even a mature Christian to keep on the path to righteousness. We live in dangerous and perilous time; ethics and morality and integrity and common courtesy left the building a long time ago. The standards of our culture and society have been moved so far off their biblical roots that everyone does what is right in his or her own eyes.

We hear statements like, "Well maybe that's wrong for you but it doesn't mean it's wrong for me." Or, "Maybe that's wrong in this situation but it's not wrong in that situation." Adultery is now an affair or an intimate relationship. Lying is skirting the truth or misremembering. Stealing is redistributing the wealth. Abortion and euthanasia is showing compassion instead of murder; and on and on...

When God took the time to write His Word down for you and me, He knew what kind of world we would be living in. He is not surprised or taken off guard at the conditions of this world. God isn't shocked, or as my friend Dick says quite often, "God isn't walking the halls of heaven wringing His hands over anything that is going on this world." God knows everything; He's omniscient. He knows exactly what you need and exactly what I need to survive and thrive in this high-tech, low-morality culture we live in.

By writing the Ten Commandments to us, God is saying, "Please allow Me to remove all of the confusion." In every one of His commandments He lovingly tells us, "I know what is best for you, I know what is best for your relationships, and I know what is best for your mind and heart and emotions and health. So I wrote a few things down; I put a few parameters in place, to guide you, and protect you, and to make sure you knew I love you. These commandments are literally matters of life and death, and I have given them to you so you could choose life."

When I write things down, often I am misunderstood. I enjoy email, but that's me. Not everyone else does. The problems with email, or letters for those of us who remember actually having to hand-write things, put them in an envelope, and walk them down to the mailbox is that your words on the page or the screen cannot convey your attitudes all that well. Unless you are extremely gifted in your use of words it is difficult to convey your heart on the printed page or on a computer screen.

On numerous occasions I have discovered that people are upset or offended with me because of something I wrote. This discovery sometimes comes months after the fact and I was oblivious to the offense because my intentions with the words I wrote were taken quite differently by the recipient than I meant. Relationships end and churches split over misunderstandings and perceived motives from written words.

God is not only extremely gifted with His use of words, His Word is alive and powerful and active and sharper than any two-edged sword. God's Word is clear and precise and there is no denying His heart and His love dripping from every syllable.

We are pretty accomplished at reading into things what isn't there. Occasionally we are right in our assumptions so we have a tendency to think we are always right. We have been burned on more than one occasion in the past so we have our guard up more often than not; we have a deep seated notion that other people are out to get us or at least they are looking to take advantage of us. We don't trust hardly anyone to do right by us so we look at everything with a skeptical and critical eye. We understand hurt and betrayal all too well so you better not mess up because one shot is all you get with me.

All of us have messed up. All of us have made wrong turns in our life. All of us have offended other people. All of us commit sin much more often than we would admit. Sometimes we mess up deliberately and sometimes we mess up out of ignorance. The humbling fact is, you and I really don't understand much about the mysteries of life; most of the time we are simply blundering our way through. We think everyone is at least similar to us and can't understand when they do something we wouldn't do.

Oh how we need God's help! Only God fully understands how life works. Only God fully knows our hearts and minds and thoughts and intentions. And God gave us His commands because He knows the consequences of our decisions and He knows the results we will experience when we do not put Him first.

Turn with me in your Bibles to the **Psalms**.

### **Psalm 119:97-100**

David is saying that you and I can have wisdom beyond our years; we can have God's wisdom and understanding. We can know what to do in every situation we face. We can have the right words to say at every time of need. We can have full understanding and know exactly what to do at every turn.

The Apostle Paul later tells us that we can have the mind and attitude of Christ Jesus (**Philippians 2:5**). And beloved, this is exactly what we can have if we will submit ourselves the commands of God; if we will view God's commands as our very life's blood instead of viewing them as the Ten Suggestions. Your love for others can be purer, your relationships can be sweeter, your decisions can be wiser, and your purpose in life can be clearer.

God says to us in **Jeremiah 29:11**, "**For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future"** (NIV).

God knows what you can become in Him as you are obedient to His commands. God knows what your future holds if would only take Him seriously. He doesn't want you to miss the opportunity. He holds it out for each of us by way of His commands.

In **Isaiah 55:8-9**, God tells us, "**For My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways," declares the Lord. "For as the heavens are higher than**

**the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways and My thoughts than your thoughts.**" Besides the fact that God is emphasizing that He knows infinitely more than we do, He is also proclaiming a message of hope to all of us.

When your thoughts gravitate toward feelings of despair, God says, "Your thoughts are not My thoughts; I know the future I have for you." When you can't figure out how to straighten out the messes of your life, God says, "Your ways are not My ways, let Me help." When your plans have failed and you want to chuck it all, God says, "My plans are not your plans, try this instead."

God tells us in this passage that He doesn't think about us like we think about us. He doesn't see the screw ups and the failures and the bad attitudes in the same way we do. We view the sum of our accomplishments, the lack of accomplishments, the failures, the wrong choices, the abuses we have suffered, and everything else we have experienced as who we are; and that picture can be pretty bleak at times. God says none of that matters; you are not the person you think you are until you see your life and your future through the lens of My Word and the life and the future I have for you.

And beloved it all begins with seeing His commandments as they were meant to be seen. And as we saw last week, seeing them in the proper light begins by preparing your heart to meet with God. Confess your sins every day. Repent and turn away from your sins every day. Read and study and meditate on and memorize and obey God's Word every day. Then you will be able to see the love God has for you in every word of His commandments.

Let's pray.