

The Terrifying & Beckoning God

Behold Our God! – Read the Bible for Life Series #7

Exodus 19-24

Pastor David Sunday

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Please turn in your Bibles to the Book of Exodus chapter 20. We've come in this section of Exodus—to the middle of the book—and last week I said there were three parts to the book of Exodus:

1. Chapters 1-18 - The God Who Redeems
2. Chapters 19-24 - The God Who Rules (we'll be looking at this section this morning)
3. Chapters 25-40 - The God Who Resides Amongst His People (we'll look at this section next week)

God redeems His people. God rules over His people. And then God resides in their midst. God delivers. God demands. God dwells.

Before we read Exodus 20—the Ten Commandments—please notice that God gives us 18 chapters of deliverance before He gives us five chapters of the law. Before God demands obedience from His people, He delivers His people. God did not deliver His people from Egypt because they obeyed His law; God's people obey His law because He delivered them from Egypt. We do not receive salvation in Christ because of our obedience but because we've been saved by grace through faith. We love to obey our God. So grace always precedes law. God's deliverance always precedes our duty and getting that order right is essential. We will misunderstand so much of Scripture if we don't get that order right.

One more observation before we read Exodus 20 is a geographical observation. We're here at the foot of Mt. Sinai now and this is a very important place in Scripture. If you look on a map, you'll see that Mt. Sinai is out of way from Egypt to the Promised Land but God led His people there and it's not an accidental diversion. God has a very important work that He intends to get done in His people's lives here at Mt. Sinai and they are going to spend 57 chapters in the narrative of the Pentateuch at the foot of Mt. Sinai. Eleven months

of their lives but 57 chapters in the Bible. So the narrative slows down its pace big time as we get here to Sinai.

This is the mountain of God where He comes down in smoke and fire. Mt. Sinai is the most awesome mountain in Scripture except for one. There's only one mountain in Scripture where God meets with His people that is more awesome than Sinai and that's the mountain we sang about in this last song. The mountain where God "has hushed the law's loud thunder, He has quenched Mt. Sinai's flame." The mountain on which God "has washed us with His blood..." our Savior's blood. The mountain we call Calvary. But Mt. Sinai stands in Scripture as a premier, monumental meeting place with God and His people.

So let's listen now to the heart of God's revelation at Mt. Sinai as I read the Word of the Lord from Exodus 20. This is the type of word that demands a physical response. The most fitting way to hear these words would be to fall on our faces before God's majesty but we probably can't all do that so let's stand and listen with reference to God's holy and awesome Word beginning in verse one of Exodus 20:

¹ And God spoke all these words, saying, ² "I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.

³ "You shall have no other gods before me.

⁴ "You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or 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. ⁵ You shall not bow down to them or serve them, for I the LORD your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and the fourth generation of those who hate me, ⁶but showing steadfast love to thousands of those who love me and keep my commandments.

⁷ "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.

⁸ "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. ⁹ Six days you shall labor, and do all your work, ¹⁰but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work, you, or your son, or your daughter, your male servant, or your female servant, or your livestock, or the sojourner who is within your gates. ¹¹For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.

¹² "Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long in the land that the LORD your God is giving you.

¹³ "You shall not murder.

¹⁴ "You shall not commit adultery.

¹⁵ "You shall not steal.

¹⁶ "You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.

¹⁷ "You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or his male servant, or his female servant, or his ox, or his donkey, or anything that is your neighbor's."

¹⁸Now when all the people saw the thunder and the flashes of lightning and the sound of the trumpet and the mountain smoking, the people were afraid and trembled, and they stood far off ¹⁹and said to Moses, "You speak to us, and we will

listen; but do not let God speak to us, lest we die." ²⁰ Moses said to the people, "Do not fear, for God has come to test you, that the fear of him may be before you, that you may not sin." ²¹ The people stood far off, while Moses drew near to the thick darkness where God was.

This is God's Word. Amen.

A few years ago, I was at my parent's house, reading our hometown newspaper. The Kenosha News has a section on Saturdays that is devoted to religion and the church. I read the advertisement of one church that I know to be a good church yet I found the ad troubling. I'm going to read you a portion of it:

"Sanctuary live worship at 9:00 a.m. and 10:30 a.m. Or the casual video café worship at 10:30 featuring live, contemporary music, coffee, pastries and fruit with the pastor's message on big-screen video."

Now, there's just one word in there that I found troubling and it wasn't coffee. I hope that the word coffee will regularly be associated with New Covenant Bible Church. And it wasn't pastries or fruit—bring them on, too. It wasn't contemporary music—I have no problem with that and like a lot of it. It wasn't even the pastor's message on big-screen video—although you can count me out of that one for good. I found only one word troubling. A word that I hope will never be associated with our worship at New Covenant Bible Church. It's the word casual. Casual worship.

When we speak of casual worship and when I say that word will never be associated with our church, please don't think I'm talking about formality or informality. It doesn't matter to me whether you wear a jacket and tie or whether you wear a shirt and jeans because it's not what you wear to church that expresses the condition of your heart. I've been in worship settings where the dress and the liturgy was really informal but there was an obvious reverence and awe for God. And I've been in worship settings where the attire was very upscale and dressy and the liturgy was formal but there was not an obvious fear and reverence for God in the worship. So casual worship isn't about formal or informal.

I think in fairness to that church, I think I understand what they were trying to say in their ad. I think they were trying to say we want our church to be welcoming and warm and friendly to those who gather. And I want that here, too, but I still bristle at the word casual being associated with the worship of the living God.

When I look at the dictionary definition of the word casual, this is what I find. It means relaxed and unconcerned; made or done without much thought or premeditation; happening by chance; accidental. Given that definition of the word casual, I believe God's

Word would strongly admonish us never to approach God in a casual manner. Never to come before Him relaxed and unconcerned, made or done without much thought or premeditation. Certainly when we come to Mt. Sinai, we find there is nothing casual about what happens here. There's nothing casual about God's encounter with His people at Mt. Sinai.

In fact, God spends all of chapter 19 preparing the people to receive His law and one of the striking features of this chapter is the number of times Moses, an 80-year-old man, has to climb up and down Mt. Sinai. Moses is the mediator between God and God's people. Moses is given special access into God's holy presence on behalf of the people and then he is to deliver God's Word to the people. Look at Exodus 19 and follow with me as we see Moses' mountain climbing experience:

- Verse 3 - then "*Moses went up to God*"
- Verse 7 - so Moses went back
- Verse 8 - so Moses brought their answer to the Lord
- Verse 14 - "*so Moses went down from the mountain to the people*"
- Verse 24 - the Lord descended to the top of Mt. Sinai and called Moses to the top of the mountain so Moses went up and the Lord said to him, "*go down and come up*" and warn the people so they do not force their way through to see the Lord and many of them perished
- Verse 25 - "*so Moses went down*"

Up and down. Up and down. Up and down. When Mike Jacoby and I were in Jordan last week, we climbed to the top of a mountain in Petra. We looked about sixty miles to the southwest to the Red Sea and the Sinai Peninsula. We were in that vicinity, climbing a mountain and I can tell you, I would not want to have to go up and down that mountain four or five times in a short period of time. And Moses was 80 when he was doing this!

God is saying, "My people need to be prepared to meet Me." God is saying, "I have delivered My people. I have redeemed My people and I want My people to live in fellowship with Me but they need to understand that living in fellowship with Me is going to be disruptive to their way of living. Living in My presence is going to bring about cataclysmic changes in their lives. I want to be in fellowship with My people. They are [He says in 19:5] My treasured possession among all peoples. They are called to be [in verse six] a kingdom of priests and a holy nation."

God says to us, “*But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.*” (I Peter 2:9). We are called to represent God to the world and to represent the world to God. In order to live in this special relationship—this covenant relationship with God—we need to understand a few things about who God is and about what God’s will is for our lives. There are some non-negotiable realities about God that God wants the people to be very clear about if they are going to live in fellowship with Him. So think of these chapters as pre-marital counseling and God is doing all the talking. God is saying, “This is what it’s going to look like to be in union with Me.”

There are several non-negotiable realities. Let’s bring them out this morning:

1. God is Dangerous

God is dangerous. There’s a reason why, after giving the law, the people were afraid and trembled. They stood far off and said to Moses, “*You speak to us, and we will listen; but do not let God speak to us, lest we die*” (Exodus 20:19).

We probably should not too flippantly say, “You know what, I just want to meet with God” without really understanding what we’re saying. God makes it very clear in preparing His people to receive this covenant that it’s a fearful thing to come into His presence. This might not be what you wanted to hear when you came to church this morning but I’ve been reading C.H. Spurgeon this week and he said this:

“Many people, when they hear a sermon, say, ‘How did you enjoy it?’ If you always enjoy sermons, the minister is not a good steward. He is not acting wisely who deals out nothing but sweets. God’s people need that the Word should at times be medicine to them and we do not like medicine. The Word is as fire and the iron does not like the fire yet it is needful to its melting. It is like a hammer and the rock does not love the hammer yet it is needful to its breaking. That which makes us hate sin is a thing to be valued.”

That’s what God is doing here. The way He appears before His people, God is causing them who think of sin but lightly. He is helping those who do not see the great evil of sin to tremble in His holy presence. In verse 8 of chapter 19, the people did not have a clear concept of the holiness and righteousness of God’s law and they were not really trembling before God like they should. Look at what they said in 19:8, “*All the people answered together and said, ‘All that the LORD has spoken we will do.’*”

I hope as you read the Bible you laugh out loud at times. This would be a good place to laugh because if you read the rest of the story, you know it’s not long before they are

going to be worshipping before a golden calf. They don't even know what the Lord requires of them yet and they're saying, "God, we'll do it. We can handle this."

But we can sympathize with them. They are God's redeemed and it is the desire of God's redeemed to be obedient to God. The fact is, though, we do not sufficiently recognize who God is and what He really requires of us. Sin has made God dangerous for sinners. Think of God's holiness as a powerfully destructive antibiotic that wars against anything that is tainted by sin. Even when we've gone through all the rituals to come into the presence of God, we still cannot come into direct contact with God's holiness and live. We see this in chapter 19 starting at verse nine:

"When Moses told the words of the people to the LORD, the LORD said to Moses, 'Go to the people and consecrate them today and tomorrow, and let them wash their garments and be ready for the third day. For on the third day the LORD will come down on Mount Sinai in the sight of all the people. And you shall set limits for the people all around, saying, 'Take care not to go up into the mountain or touch the edge of it. Whoever touches the mountain shall be put to death. No hand shall touch him...'"

You couldn't even touch the person who touched the mountain. He needed to be stoned or shot. Even a beast had to be killed. They cannot live...they cannot touch the mountain. God is establishing boundaries around His holy presence. God's people need to be protected from God—by God. They need to be protected *from* God—*by* God. They cannot live in close proximity to God's holy presence unprotected.

When Mike and I were in Jordan, we went to the site where Jesus was supposedly baptized by John the Baptist. The Jordan River is very narrow now and the way across the river was only about 30 yards. It was so close and on the other side, I saw an Israeli flag and a tourist center and realized, "I'm looking at the Promised Land right now. I've never been this close to Israel before. I could easily wade across this river and end up in Israel in a minute or two."

The only problem was I looked up and I saw there, on the perimeter, men in army uniforms with machine guns and I knew if I even got close to the other side of that river, I would not come out of the river alive. It would be a dangerous thing to venture into that territory unprotected.

That's what God is saying to His people: "My presence is dangerous for you because you are sinners."

2. God is Awesome

The second lesson we see in this chapter is that God is awesome and we must never approach Him casually. Look at Exodus 19:16-19:

“On the morning of the third day there were thunders and lightnings and a thick cloud on the mountain and a very loud trumpet blast, so that all the people in the camp trembled. Then Moses brought the people out of the camp to meet God, and they took their stand at the foot of the mountain. Now Mount Sinai was wrapped in smoke because the LORD had descended on it in fire. The smoke of it went up like the smoke of a kiln, and the whole mountain trembled greatly. [Can you imagine that sight?] And as the sound of the trumpet grew louder and louder, Moses spoke, and God answered him in thunder.”

God did all these physical manifestations so as to speak to the people and say, “I am a holy God and My worship and My presence is not to be entered into casually or flippantly.” How would you ever dare to stroll up to that mountain—to that presence of God—with your hands in your pockets and whistling?

He is a consuming fire. I wonder, have we forgotten in the church today what awe feels like? What it’s like to tremble in God’s presence? Have we lost sight of how astonishing it is that we can be in the presence of a holy God and survive? Have we lost sight of that?

I’m chastened as I read a writer like Annie Dillard. She has a provocative assessment of much that passes for Christian worship today. Listen to how she puts it:

“On the whole, I do not find Christians, outside of the catacombs, sufficiently sensible of conditions. Does anyone have the foggiest idea what sort of power we so blithely invoke? Or, as I suspect, does no one believe a word of it? The churches are children playing on the floor with their chemistry sets, mixing up a batch of TNT to kill a Sunday morning. It is madness to wear ladies’ straw hats and velvet hats to church; we should all be wearing crash helmets. Ushers should issue life preservers and signal flares; they should lash us to our pews.”

Explorers who are unmindful of conditions died. Why don’t similarly unprepared worshipers perish on the spot? That’s a question we need to ask. There is an answer but we won’t appreciate the answer if we’ve never asked the question; if we’ve never grappled with the reality of the dangerous God who is awesome in His holiness and not to be treated lightly.

So God gives physical manifestations to strike awe and fear into the hearts of the people but God gives something else. It's called His law which brings us to lesson number three.

3. God's Law Reflects God's Holy Nature

If we want to know who God is, one of the ways is to look at the Ten Commandments. The very first words out of the Lord's mouth in verse two of chapter 20 are these: "*I am the Lord your God.*" So what follows is going to be a revelation of God's character to us. The Ten Commandments are God in ten words. It's a verbal revelation of God's mind and God's will. "*I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt...*" There it is again—salvation comes before obedience; deliverance before demands.

Have you ever looked through the Ten Commandments and just thought and pondered, "What do these commandments teach me about God and who He is?"

The **first commandment**: "*You shall have no other gods before me.*" This tells me that God is unique. He is supreme. He is the One and only God. He will tolerate no rivals. He says, "I am God and there is no other. I am God and there is none like Me." So I must not transfer to another the adoration, the trust, the prayer and the thanksgiving that belong to God alone. He is the only, unique, supreme God.

The **second commandment**: "*You shall not make for yourself a carved image...*" reminds us that He is the living God. He cannot be captured or contained or managed by anyone for any of our purposes. He is invisible. He is incomparable. He is unstoppable. Idols can do nothing yet they are attractive to us because we think we can control them. God can do whatever He desires and He is frightening to us precisely because we cannot control Him. He is the living and jealous God.

Then the **third commandment**: "*You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain...*" (20:7) tells us that God is a God who will not be used, will not be manipulated, will not be taken for granted. His very name is to be spoken with the utmost reverence and awe. He is committed absolutely to His own glorious reputation. He will not tolerate the sully of His reputation.

The **fourth commandment**: "*Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy...*" brings us back to the creation and reminds us that God was a God who rested after He had created the world and He was satisfied with His work. He is able to give rest to those who trust in Him.

Those are the first four commandments and then we have six more but notice that it's like a plane with two wings. You can't fly a plane if you cut off one of those wings. The first four commandments deal with our vertical relationship to God and then the second set deal with our horizontal relationships with people. Some people want to put all the focus on the horizontal and want to say, "I'm going to live the good life...a righteous life...a moral life." But they aren't caring about the vertical, about worshiping God. And what God is saying to us in these commandments is, "Until you learn to worship Me, you cannot live rightly before your fellow man."

I think it was John Calvin who said something to the effect that to live righteously before men without first worshipping God is like cutting the head off a corpse and saying, "My how beautiful it is." It just doesn't work. You have to worship God before you can live rightly before men.

Then we have **commandment number five** in verse 12—"Honor your father and your mother..."—reminds us that God is a God of authority.

"You shall not murder"—the **sixth commandment**—reminds us that God is the Lord and the giver of life who values all life and prohibits any anger or contempt or hatred which endangers or devalues life.

The **seventh commandment**—"You shall not commit adultery"—points us to the utter faithfulness and fidelity of God.

The **eighth commandment**—"You shall not steal"—points us to the generosity of God who richly provides all we need.

The **ninth commandment**—"You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor"—points us to the truthfulness of God. He is the God who cannot lie.

The **tenth commandment**—"You shall not covet..."—points us to the all-sufficiency and all-satisfying nature of God.

These provide a statement of God's will in concise form that is basically saying to us, "Behold your God. This is who I am."

Before we move on to the next lesson, let me just say this: Without taking a show of hands, I would imagine that most of us would agree that the Ten Commandments should be posted in our courtrooms and that it's a big problem when a society says, "We don't care about these commandments anymore. We're rejecting them." We know this speaks badly of the future of our society when we reject and throw out God's authority. But, rather than

spending a lot of time and energy and money fighting those kinds of battles, why don't we invest more time and energy in saying, "God, would You replicate this life in me? Let my life be a living example of obedience to You, of worship to You and love to my fellow-man." When we demonstrate the Ten Commandments—when they are on display in our lives—they are going to be a lot more compelling testimony to a watching world than when they are on display in a courtroom.

Ironically, a lot of people who fight for the Ten Commandments don't even know what they are. Stephen Colbert was interviewing a congressman who was vehemently saying, "We need to put these Ten Commandments in the courtrooms."

Colbert said, "You really believe that don't you."

"Yes, I do."

Colbert asked, "What are the Ten Commandments?"

All of a sudden, there was hemming and hawing. The congressman could name one or two; he didn't even know what they were. More people know the ingredients of a Big Mac sandwich than the Ten Commandments. So let's put our energy and focus on knowing this God who reveals His will to us, asking Him to put it on display in our lives. God's law reveals God's nature and we are called to be revelatory in the way we live our lives by displaying the nature of God.

4. God's Law Reveals our Sinful Nature

Just as God's law reveals God's nature, our fourth lesson is that God's law reveals our sinful nature. It's interesting that in Exodus 19:8, the people were saying "*all that the Lord has spoken, we will do*" but in chapter 20, after hearing the law, they are trembling and afraid and they're saying don't let God speak to us any longer. There's been a transformation in their lives. What they've realized is that "I have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. My life does not conform to these commandments." It's a beautiful thing to see that. It's a gift of God's grace when we realize that. Not everyone sees it.

William Kilpatrick wrote in *First Things* magazine that a colleague at Boston College asked members of his philosophy class to write an anonymous essay about a personal struggle over right and wrong, good and evil. Most of the students, however, were unable to complete the assignment. "Why?" he asked. Well, they said and apparently this was said without irony, "We haven't done anything wrong. We never had a personal struggle about right or wrong, good or evil."

When God comes to His people and gives them His holy law, He is giving them a mirror to show them what's in their hearts and that's love. It is God's love that is doing that. God is saying, "I'm not going to let you live under the illusion that you are not sinners. Because if you live under that illusion you are never going to recognize your need for My salvation."

You know the worst disaster that could befall your life is not that you become a moral failure. The worst disaster that could befall your life is that you be such a success morally that you don't think you have any need for Jesus. To be confident that you're alright, that would be a disaster.

When we look at the Ten Commandments, we see that only a perfect man can do all these things. Only a perfect man is always single-mindedly radical about loving God and having no other gods before Him. Only a perfect man always has pure and exalted thoughts of God and never gives his worship to anyone or anything else. Only a perfect man uses his words to communicate who God is in ways that honor God's character and never speaks irreverently of God. Only a perfect man enjoys the worship of God so profoundly that he manipulates his schedule to make God central, never just fitting God into his busy life. Only a perfect man always overflows with gratitude toward his parents, never acting condescending or uncaring. Only a perfect man always breaths life into the people around him, never taking it from them through anger or bitterness or wrath or clamor. Only a perfect man is pure in heart and mind, never lusting after someone else and never engaging in sexual impurity in his life. Only a perfect man is always looking for opportunities to give and to meet the needs of others rather than manipulating or stealing from others. Only a perfect man always speaks the truth from his heart.

You might think, "You know, I do all these things." Like the rich young ruler who said, "*Surely I have kept all these things from my youth.*" Or does Jesus say, "*Go and sell all you have and give to the poor.*" What was He revealing, "Yeah, on the outside maybe you've obeyed but you have a covetous heart."

Here's the truth. We can obey all these commandments on the outside but our hearts resent it. Our hearts wish we could be free from this God who commands our lives. Apart from grace, we don't want to live under God's authority. Apart from grace, we are all lawbreakers. The first and the tenth commandments are really important because they get to the heart of things. The others can maybe be managed on the externals but the first and the tenth get to your heart. What we see when we read the Ten Commandments rightly is

“false and full of sin I am.” It’s like a PET scan over my soul and I’ve got sin lighting up all over the place. When I read God’s law, it reveals to me my sinful nature.

Martin Luther described God’s law as a divinely sent Hercules to attack and kill the monster of self-righteousness and to show me how desperately I need God’s grace. So after being confronted with the terrifying nature of God and the perfect will of God that reveals the holy character of God and then seeing the contrast of my own sinfulness, the appropriate response is the way the Israelites respond—with trembling and fear. But what’s so surprising is what Moses says to them next. Look at Exodus 20:20. After the people say they’re afraid, Moses says to them what? Fear not. *"Do not fear, for God has come to test you, that the fear of Him may be before you, that you may not sin."*

I think that is a powerful, paradoxical statement. God has just gotten the people to fear and then He says, “Don’t fear.” But then He says, “Fear Me.” So what are we supposed to do? Fear God or not fear God? The answer is both. There is only one way you can come before this holy God and not be absolutely destroyed in His presence. There’s only one way that you come before this holy God and actually draw near and not be destroyed. The answer is what the people asked for in verse 19: *"You speak to us, and we will listen; but do not let God speak to us, lest we die."* What are they saying there? We need a mediator.

5. God’s Law Requires a Mediator

We need someone who can come between us and God. Someone who can deliver God’s will to us. Someone who can represent God’s way to us and someone who can represent us in the presence of God. And Moses is that mediator. So Moses, in verse 21, gets to draw near to God and in chapter 24, Moses and all the elders of Israel get to go into the presence of God after blood sacrifice is made for them.

But in the new covenant it gets even better. It’s not just the leaders who can draw near; it’s all of God’s people. Remember Hebrews 10? Hebrews 10:20 says a new and living way has been opened for us through the blood of Jesus, through His flesh, through His body that has been broken for us. God has opened up the way into the holy of holies, into that dangerous place for sinners to enter and God has

said to us in Christ, *“Draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith...”* because you’ve been sprinkled, you’ve been washed with the blood of Christ. You get to draw near to the holy God. If you’re in Christ, He’s not dangerous to you anymore. You’re welcome there.

You might think, “Okay, so I’m in Christ. My sins have been forgiven. I’m clothed in God’s righteousness. I don’t need to be worried anymore about obedience. I don’t need to care anymore about God’s law. It doesn’t matter what I do.” Wrong!

Look again at Exodus 20:20: *“Moses said to the people, ‘Do not fear, for God has come to test you, that the fear of him may be before you, that you may not sin.’”* In other words, you’ve been saved by grace alone. You’ve been given the gift of God’s law which shows you God’s nature, reveals to you your sin, causes you to tremble before God’s holiness. Then God says to you, “Child, remember. I’ve redeemed you. I’ve saved you. You are washed and you are covered in the Lord Jesus so don’t be afraid. I am not angry with you any longer but don’t be casual either. Live in the fear of Me. Walk in obedience to Me.”

There’s a place in the New Testament that says this beautifully. Turn in your Bibles to Hebrews 12. There’s this concept among Christians that one of the reasons we get casual is we treat the blood of Jesus lightly. And we think that our forgiveness frees us now from the need to obey. Actually our forgiveness fills us with a whole new desire for obedience to God’s law. Look at Hebrews 12:18-24. He’s making a contrast between Mt. Sinai which, as I said, is the second most awesome mountain in Scripture. Second only to Mt. Zion where Jesus has met His people. Look at what he says:

“For you have not come to what may be touched, a blazing fire and darkness and gloom and a tempest and the sound of a trumpet and a voice whose words made the hearers beg that no further messages be spoken to them. For they could not endure the order that was given, ‘If even a beast touches the mountain, it shall be stoned.’ Indeed, so terrifying was the sight that Moses said, ‘I tremble with fear.’ But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable angels in festal gathering, and to the assembly of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect, and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel.”

What's the effect of that in our lives? Look at verses 28 and 29: *"Therefore let us be grateful for receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, and thus let us offer to God acceptable worship, with reverence and awe, for our God is a consuming fire."*

Let our prayer be teach us holy obedience, Lord. True obedience. Holy reverence. True humility. Test our thoughts and our attitudes in the radiance of Your purity.

There's a statement that a Puritan made—chew on this as we think about how God's law should be applied to our lives. He said, "The law sends us to the gospel that we may be justified in Christ alone. Then the gospel sends us to the law again to inquire what is our duty in being justified."

Everyone is one of those places this morning. Either the Ten Commandments are directing you to Christ and the gospel, or the gospel and the Lord Jesus Christ are directing you back to the Ten Commandments, saying here's how I want you to live in light of such great salvation.

Let's pray in closing. As you bow your heads and close your eyes, some of you right now are in a position of thinking that you can gain acceptance of God through your good works and obedience. What this passage should teach you is that is absolutely not true. You need Christ. You need to come to Jesus.

Others are in Christ, accepted, justified, washed by His blood but you're allowing your lives to become casual and careless and disobedient. Jesus is saying to you, "You need to look at God and God's will. You need to value obedience to His commandments. His commandments are not burdensome; they are a delight."

Let's pray and ask God to work these truths into our hearts and lives this week.

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All Scriptures quoted directly from the English Standard Version unless otherwise noted.

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