

Tommy Meador / General Adult

Exodus / Exodus 20:1–17

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## Introduction

- I can't think of anything worse than a wrongful conviction. Fernando Bermudez's wrongful conviction. <https://www.law.umich.edu/special/exoneration/Pages/casedetail.aspx?caseid=3023> What Bermudez did after being set free:

The first thing I did, I went running in Inwood Hill Park ... where I had all these childhood memories of wanting to be a geologist. I used to pick rocks and collect insects before I became less of a nerd and more a person in trouble. I'm coming off my run, and I'm doing something I had sorely missed: I'm looking at a tree, and I'm just admiring it. I had been deprived of nature for so long ... I finally got to feel the bark. I was crying hugging the tree.

- Freedom is what we all want. We don't want to be enslaved. We don't want to be oppressed. We want to be free to choose our own path, to make our own decisions, to live where we want to live, to do the things we want to do.
- Fact of the matter is you can be free and at the same time enslaved. You can live where you want, choose what you want, do what you want, and yet still be enslaved. Some of you feel enslaved this morning because your free choices have led to what seem like enslaving consequences.

- True freedom isn't doing whatever you want to do with your life. True freedom is living in alignment with what you were made for. True freedom is living out God's will for your life.
- Israel had been set free; delivered from Egypt. But, would they walk in freedom God had given them? In [Exodus 20](#), God gives the Israelites ten commands. The ten commands are intended to teach God's people how to walk in true freedom.
- I know it's Easter Sunday. We're supposed to talk about the resurrection of Jesus, and we will. I want to show you how the ten commands point us to the resurrection of Jesus Christ and ultimate freedom.
- As we look at the ten commands this morning, I want to show you two ways you can live in real freedom.

## **If you want freedom, keep the commands (SPOILER ALERT: You can't!)**

- God brought Israel out of Egypt to be His treasured possession, a kingdom of priests - to represent Him to the world. He brought the people into relationship with Himself ([Exodus 19:4](#)).
- In [Exodus 19](#), God comes to His people at Mt. Sinai to establish His covenant with His people.
- God had freed them from Egypt where they were under the rule of Pharaoh. Now, they are under the rule of God. God is a far better king than Pharaoh. God actually wants a relationship with His people. He wants good for them.
- A good relationship with God that they live in a covenant relationship with Him. If they do what God says, they will be a blessed people.

- God descends to Mt. Sinai. His presence is terrifying. The people refuse to ascend the mountain because to meet with the God who saved them because of their fear.
- Moses ascends Mt. Sinai with Aaron to receive the ten “words” or commands from God. These are the expectations that God has for His people. If the people keep the commands of God, they will live as the free people of God. Their lives will be aligned with His will. That’s freedom.
- We look at commands as restrictive, but God’s commands are not restrictive. E.g., don’t commit adultery. In our culture, that sounds restrictive. We ask: Who is God to give parameters on my sexuality? Yet, what does sexual promiscuity lead to? Brokenness - What does faithfulness in marriage under God’s design lead to? Fulfillment, satisfaction, etc. The commands don’t restrict, they free.
- The Ten Commands stand in stark contrast to the lives the Hebrews had in Egypt. Life in Egypt was restrictive. Life with God is freeing. Ten commands = what it looks like to live as a free people in God’s Kingdom. Remember: they had been delivered (set free); now learning how to walk in that freedom. Grace before law; not law so that you might be saved.
- First four deal with relationship with God, last six relationship with others. Summary: love God, love others (greatest command). Rest of Torah an extension of the ten commands - how they are lived out. Ten commands repeated in [Deuteronomy 5](#) as people prepare to go in Promised Land.
- 1. Have no other gods - in Egypt many gods. What made Israel distinct was conviction that there was one true God who created them and ruled over them. Very different than what they experienced in Egypt. God was to be the only ONE who ruled over their lives. Same for you: We live in

freedom when we place our lives under the rule of God, and nothing/no one else.

- 2. No idols - God is a living God - any idol is lifeless and can't do anything for you. For you, is there anything other than God that can give you real hope? Real life? Anything you turn to for real life, lasting joy, and lasting hope is an idol. The warning: if you give yourself to idolatry, it will have consequences on your entire household. Idolatry is not a private sin that only affects you.
- 3. Do not misuse the name of God - more than cussing, but making the name of God worthless in your life. "I swear by God" meaning nothing. Or, "I will do God's will" and not doing it. Or, not revering God's name in your own life.
- 4. Honor the Sabbath - no rest in Egypt, now an opportunity to rest and worship.
- 5. Honor your father and mother - in the home you learn how to honor authority - parents first representation of God's authority. Freeing when we honor those who God has placed above us. Command with a promise - society goes better when family is intact.
- 6. No murder - Every person made in the image of God. Value life. Don't take it. No wonder Jesus said, "If you hate someone..." It's freeing when you value the lives of others and love them instead of hate. Hatred is enslaving.
- 7. No adultery - not even lust. Marriage and family sacred to God. Adultery destroys families - the institution that God has established for human flourishing.
- 8. You shall not steal - In Egypt, nothing belonged to them. Egyptians constantly stole from the Hebrews. Treat others with respect. Don't take from others. Give.

- 9. You shall not lie - Ever been trapped in your own lies? Enslaving - but the truth sets you free. Being honest and truthful builds trust. Honesty is foundational to healthy relationships.
- 10. You shall not covet - It's enslaving to want someone's else's life or stuff. Freeing to be content with what God has given you.
- Ten commands - if you keep them, it's freeing. Problem: Israel couldn't keep them. They said, "We will do all that you say" (19:8). But, they didn't. Right after God gives the commands, they make a golden calf and worship an idol.
- **You can't keep the commands if you're not close to God.** The invitation was for Israel to come close ([Exodus 19:13](#)). However, they chose to stand at a distance in fear ([Exodus 20:18-21](#)). You can only be conformed to the image of God and live in His freedom if you actually come close to God and walk in intimacy with Him. If you don't come close to God, you will always see His commands as restrictive rather than freeing.
- The tabernacle/sacrificial system a reminder that the people
- Real freedom is in being so close to God in that it changes your desires and gives you a longing to actually walk in His commands because you know that He knows what's best for you.
- The story of Israel is that while God calls them to a life freedom in His Kingdom, they reject His commands.
- **Your sin nature keeps you from being close to God.** Israel saw the holiness of God at Sinai and they saw themselves for who they were - sinners.
- [Galatians 3:24](#) - the law our guardian until Christ. Or, tutor... Law not designed to save us. Designed to teach us how to walk in freedom. But, we're not different than Israel. We have a sin nature that keeps us from being close to God. For us, the Law tutors/teaches us by being a mirror.

We can hold the ten commands up to our lives and see where we fall short.

- Hold the ten commands up to your life. What do you see? You see your own sin. You see that you're a liar. You see that you covet. You see that you are an idolater, that you at times treat God's name as worthless. You see you for who you are. You see that the very thing that is supposed to give you freedom actually exposes who you are: a slave to sin.
- To not keep the commands of God is to rebel against the God who desires for you to live in freedom. It's not simply a mistake to disobey the commands of God. It's treason against the King, and you deserve punishment for your treason against God ([Romans 6:23](#)).
- If you want freedom, keep the commands. The problem is you can't unless you are brought close to God and changed by God. And, that's the Easter story.

## If you want freedom, surrender to Jesus.

- Some 1400-1500 years after Moses, Jesus came to this earth.
- Jesus came with one mission - to bring us close to God - to bring us into a relationship with the God of all creation so we could walk in real freedom.
- **Jesus was born under the law.** Jesus came ([Galatians 4:4-5](#)) to redeem us from our inability to live in obedience to God's commands. Jesus was born under the law so that we might receive adoption as sons. Or, to bring us close to God.
- **Jesus kept the law.** [Hebrews 4:15](#). Jesus was tempted like we are, but He never sinned. He perfectly lived out the law of God in our place ([Matthew 5:17](#)). He did what we could not do.
- **Jesus died under the law's curse as a transgressor of the law.** Failure to keep the law brings judgment, not blessing. ([Deuteronomy](#)

[27:26](#)) ([Isaiah 53:12](#)) - At the cross, Jesus treated as if He had done everything we did even though He had done nothing. He bore our sins. At the cross Jesus became a curse for us ([Galatians 3:13](#)).

- **Jesus rose from the dead so we might experience real freedom.**

The resurrection matters because if Jesus rose from the dead, everything He said is true, and everything He set out to accomplish, He accomplished. His resurrection proves that He is God who came to save us from the curse of the Law and bring us close to the Father, so we might be adopted as sons and daughters, so that the Spirit of God might take up residence in us, so that we might have changed desires - so that we might actually want to keep God's commands because we are convinced there's freedom in living God's ways. And, by His Spirit, we can actually do it. Not perfectly, but we can actually live God's way because God has changed us. He's given us a new heart - a heart that desires obedience. We can actually serve Him as the one true God. We can actually have no other gods before Him. We can actually love Him and love others. We can actually flee adultery, not covet, etc. because of the One who lives inside of us changing us into His image.

- We don't obey perfectly, but you can grow in obedience as you depend on the Spirit and ask Him to help you. Follower of Jesus, identify where you are falling back into slavery and ask God to help you stay on the path of freedom.
- The resurrection brings us close without us having to fear the judgment of God because Jesus was judged in our place. This is the hope of Easter - the hope of New Life in Christ! A life where we can actually walk in freedom as we put sin to death by the Spirit and live in alignment with God's will for our lives.
- So, how do you respond? What's the point for you? Try harder to keep the ten commands? Try to use God's name in vain less? Try to take a longer nap on the Sabbath day? Try not to lust as much? Two ways to respond:

- **Experience the depth of despair.** Don't look at the ten commands as a path to salvation. They're not. Look at them as a tutor - to teach you about the life of freedom that God wants for you that you cannot obtain unless you come close to Him. Use the commands as a mirror - and see yourself for who you are, a sinner in need of a Savior. Let the ten commands break your heart this morning as you see how you have fallen short.
- **Experience the joy of salvation.** The ten commands should cause us to see our despair, but you don't have to stay in despair. Look to the cross this morning. Look to the One who died in your place. Look to the empty tomb. See that Jesus is alive so that you might have life. Give your life to Jesus this morning, and begin experiencing real freedom as the Spirit of God takes over your life and teaches you how to walk in the freedom that God has given you in Christ Jesus.