

The Gift of Grace

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Exodus 20: 18-21

Now 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 ¹⁹ and 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. (Exodus 20:18-21 ESV)

How were the 10 Words received? Let us describe:

- Thunder flashes
 - Lightning
 - Sound of the trumpet
 - Mountain smoking
- People were afraid and trembling

Just one chapter earlier we saw similar sounds and events when Moses was going to Mount Sinai.

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. ¹⁹ And as the sound of the trumpet grew louder and louder, Moses spoke, and God answered him in thunder. ²⁰ The LORD came down on Mount Sinai, to the top of the mountain. And the LORD called Moses to the top of the mountain, and Moses went up. (Exodus 19:18-20 ESV)

The point in this event: **“The Lord came down on Mount Sinai.”**

The presence of the Lord was awesome, and the Israelites witnessed **the glory of God** on that mountain. They witnessed it after receiving the 10 Words.

Why are they terrified?

1. God just gave them His righteous requirements. God is asking total commitment to worship Him ONLY.
 2. Total commitment of time, property, possessions, marriage- relationships, speech, and desires...
 3. They were afraid of the judgment of God as well. Thunder, fire, trumpet all sound like the Judgment Day.
- So what is next thing they ask Moses?

they stood far off ¹⁹ and said to Moses, "You speak to us, and we will listen; but do not let God speak to us, lest we die." (Exodus 20:18b,19 ESV)

"Moses, you continue to be our mediator. We don't want to speak with God directly. We are afraid." Well, for obvious reasons.

"Moses, you go and face the Holy God. We cannot. We are afraid. We are sinners."

What was Moses' response:

"Do not fear, for God has come to test you, that the fear of him may be before you, that you may not sin." (Exodus 20:20 ESV)

Don't be afraid.

You see God's intention is not to destroy them, it is to save them.

He tested them, and they failed the test. They sinned. God is teaching them how to not sin.

Again, let me repeat. God is a savior.

Remember how the 10 Words start:

"I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. (Exodus 20:1 ESV)

God is a savior; God liberates people from slavery.

"So rather than cringing in fear, terrified by God's law, they were called to live for God in joy and obedience. Moses told them that the fear of the Lord would be with them-- not fear simply in the sense of horrible terror, but also in the sense of reverence and respect."¹

Reverence will help to them to obey God.

Next?

The people stood far off, while Moses drew near to the thick darkness where God was. (Exodus 20:21 ESV)

Like in the temple where only High Priest could enter behind the curtain to meet with God, here we see the same image. Moses, the mediator enters in dark could where God is. He has direct access to talk with God.

What's next?

The law of God is good. It is like a **plumbline**; the construction man needs it to build the wall on a straight line.

The law reveals how sinful we are, and we need redemption. Paul says in Romans 3,

through the law comes knowledge of sin. (Romans 3:20b ESV)

through the law we become conscious of our sin. (Romans 3:20b NIV)

J.I.Packer summarizes about God's law saying:

1 to maintain order in society

2 to convince us of sin and drive us to Christ for life

3 to spur us on in obedience, by means of its standards and its sanctions, all of which express God's own nature.²

As Moses was the mediator between the Israelites and God, God so much loved us that he sent His Son to be ultimate and final mediator between humanity and God.

The gift of Grace

But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it—²² the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction:²³ for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,²⁴ and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus,²⁵ whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. (Romans 3:21-25 ESV)

For all who believe, for all who have faith in the only mediator Jesus Christ.

No distinction: we all have sinned and fall short. All cultures, all nations, all people.

We can only be justified by HIS GRACE, as a gift.

How come?

Jesus took the penalty of the sin:

through redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood to be received by faith.

Paul describes this saying:

God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. (2 Cor 5:21)

We cannot be justified by keeping the law. We cannot.
With Christ, we are not under the law.
This does not mean we should not keep the 10 Words.
The law teaches us how to conduct our lives. It will manifest our sinful life.
Oh yes, they are very relevant for us today.
And Jesus summarized the 10 Words in this: Love God... Love your neighbor...

Jesus is teaching us God's Law all over again.
It can only start when Jesus changes our heart.

For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, ⁶ who gave himself as a ransom for all, which is the testimony given at the proper time. (1 Timothy 2:5,6 ESV)

1. Kevin DeYoung, *The 10 Commandments*, p 220
2. J.I. Packer, *Keeping the 10 Commandments*, p 110