**The Ten Commandments: A Reminder**

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Y. Joe Kim

*The LORD said to Moses, "Come up to me on the mountain, and wait there; and I will give you the tablets of stone, with the law and the commandment, which I have written for their instruction." 13 So Moses set out with his assistant Joshua, and Moses went up into the mountain of God. 14 To the elders he had said, "Wait here for us, until we come to you again; for Aaron and Hur are with you; whoever has a dispute may go to them." 15 Then Moses went up on the mountain, and the cloud covered the mountain. 16 The glory of the LORD settled on Mount Sinai, and the cloud covered it for six days; on the seventh day he called to Moses out of the cloud. 17 Now the appearance of the glory of the LORD was like a devouring fire on the top of the mountain in the sight of the people of Israel. 18 Moses entered the cloud, and went up on the mountain. Moses was on the mountain for forty days and forty nights.* (Exodus 24:12-18)

**1. We are Forgetful**

The other day I visited a family in our congregation. Their daughter joined us and had a time of devotion. After we spent time sharing about what the passage meant to each of us, I offered a closing prayer. While I was praying, I prayed for the couple first and stopped because I forgot the daughter's name. She told me her name and we finished the prayer. I was embarrassed and apologized to her that I had forgotten her name in the moment.

Forgetting a name often happens when I pray for a group of people. What about you? Have you ever forgotten anything important? Have you ever forgotten maybe even something that God has asked you to do? Do you think that God has a way of helping us to remember? Yes. He does.

**2. Moses on Mount Sinai**

Today's Old Testament passage, Exodus 24, talks about Moses' experience at Mount Sinai. In order to understand the background of this chapter, we need to read chapters 19 & 20. On the first day of the third month from the departure from Egypt, the Israelites reached the Sinai wilderness and camped by the Mountain. Mt. Sinai is also called Horeb, where God appeared to Moses in a burning bush. As the Israelites were camped by Sinai, Moses went on the mountain and God spoke to him there.

God reminded Moses of what God had done to rescue His people from Egypt and compared His delivering the people out of Egypt to His carrying them on eagles' wings (Deut. 32:10-11). When young eagles learn to fly, the

mother eagle flies under them with her wings spread out to catch them. On the mountain, God proposed a covenant relationship with Israel and promised that they would be His treasured possession and a holy nation if they would accept and obey the covenant.

When Moses informed the elders of Israel and the people about God's proposal, they responded by promising to obey His laws. In chapter 24, God summoned again Moses, Aaron's two sons, Nadab and Abihu, and 70 of the elders of the people. God is going to confirm the Mosaic Covenant with His people on Mt. Sinai.

In Exodus 24:12, God says to Moses, ***"Come up to me on the mountain, and wait there; and I will give you the tablets of stone, with the law and the commandment, which I have written for their instruction."*** When we read chapter 20 of Exodus, we notice God already had given Moses the Ten Commandments, but now God calls Moses to give him the "tablets of stone" that the Ten Commandments are inscribed on.

**3. The Purpose of the Ten Commandments**

Why do you think God gave the tablets of stone that the Ten Commandments are inscribed on? The Ten Commandments are the content of the covenant between God and the Israelites.

The term "covenant" is from the Latin origin (con venire), meaning a coming together. It presupposes two or more parties who come together to make a contract, agreeing on promises, privileges, and responsibilities. The term "covenant" in the Old Testament is *berit* which means a solemn binding agreement or contract between God and His people Israel. The term *berit* was also used for the covenant of marriage. The Covenant between God and the Israelites is like a marriage between them. Ezekiel 16:8 (NLT) says, "***when I passed by again, I saw that you were old enough for love. So I wrapped my cloak around you to cover your nakedness and declared my marriage vows. I made a covenant with you, says the Sovereign Lord, and you became mine."*** God noticed Israel is of marriageable age. God then entered into a covenant of marriage with her. God pledges His fidelity to her and takes her as His own.

The tablets of stone that the Ten Commandments are written are a reminding evidence that the Israelites are in a special relationship with God and they would always experience the presence of the Lord. God wanted them to remember that they belong to God and are different from any other people. The tablets of the Ten Commandments are like a wedding ring. The tablets would remind the Israelites of God's love and His presence.

Yet the Bible tells us that the Israelites left the Lord many times and followed other gods. That's why Hosea 3:1 says, "***Then the Lord said to me,***

***"Go and love your wife again, even though she commits adultery with another lover. This will illustrate that the Lord still loves Israel, even though the people have turned to other gods and love to worship them***." The Lord tells Hosea to show his love to his adulterous wife Gomer once more. Such an act of forgiveness would serve a lesson of God's love for Israel despite her unfaithfulness to the Lord.

**4. The New Covenant**

What do you think is the greatest love of God shown in the Old Testament? I believe that the greatest love of God is demonstrated in giving the promise of the new covenant. "***The days are surely coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah*** (Jeremiah 31:31). God promises to give a new covenant to Israel. The new covenant would be different from the old covenant made at the time of the Exodus because the old covenant has been broken by the Israelites. As part of the New Covenant, God promises that he would forgive Israel's wickedness and remember their sins no more.

How is God's promise of the New Covenant fulfilled? When Jesus has the last supper with his disciples, he says, "***then he took the cup, gave thanks and offered it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you. This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins***" (Matthew 26:27-28). If the Ten Commandments are the reminder of God's love and presence in the Old Covenant, Jesus is the reminder of God's love and his presence in the New Covenant. In the Old Covenant, through the animal sacrifice the sin was forgiven. But in the New Covenant, Jesus himself became the sacrifice for the forgiveness of sin.

**5. The Transfiguration of Jesus**

Jesus' disciples can't understand the purpose of Jesus' sacrifice on the cross. One day, Jesus takes with him Peter, James and John and leads them up a high mountain. There Jesus is transfigured before his three disciples. Jesus' face shines like the sun and his clothes become as white as the light. And he talks with Moses and Elijah. Moses represents the old covenant. Elijah represents the prophets who foretell the coming of the Messiah. The presence of Moses and Elijah with Jesus confirms that Jesus is the fulfillment of the prophecy in the Old Testament. And three disciples also hear a voice from the cloud, "***This is my son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased. Listen to him***" (Matthew 17:5). This voice confirms that Jesus is the son of God. Although Jesus dies on the cross, Jesus is confirmed that he is a reminder of God's love and presence. Although we often forget about our

intimate relationship with God, the Lord keeps reminding us of our identity and His unfailing love.

**6. Conclusion**

Sometimes we learn that God's unfailing love can be experienced in our society. I met a 90-year old man at my first church in Missouri. One day, he asked me whether I would visit his wife in a nursing home. I said yes. When I arrived at the nursing home, he was feeding his wife. His wife had Alzheimer's disease. I asked him how long his wife had been staying in the nursing home. He said it had been about 10 years. He said he visited his wife to feed her every day. I asked him whether his wife would recognize him. He said "no." I asked, "if she does not recognize you, would your visit make a difference to her? He said, "she would not know who I am, but I know who she is." She was his beloved wife.

Another husband I would like to mention is my neighbor. His wife passed away last year. She had Alzheimer's disease and struggled for over 10 years and stayed in a nursing home and hospice facility for four years. He paid $12,000 a month for her care. The total cost he spent for his wife for four years was $500,000. He wrote a booklet entitled "Layman's Alzheimer's Observations." He is such a loving husband to his wife. From these two husbands, I saw God's unfailing love for their wives. I am sure that the love of God would be much greater than the love of these two husbands. Do we always remember God's amazing love?

**7. Application**

Whenever Christine and I visit someone, I love to take pictures with them. Those pictures remind us of the moments we spend together with God's people. For the Israelites, the Ten Commandments are the reminder of both their identity as God's chosen spiritual wife and God's love and presence. For Christians, Jesus is the reminder of our identity and God's love and presence. And the Bible tells us how much Jesus loves us. If we remember our identity and God's love and presence, there is nothing to be afraid of and nothing to worry about.

Lent begins this coming Wednesday. How would we like to be reminded of God's love and His presence in our lives? I would like to encourage you to do three things during Lent. 1) Attend worship service every Sunday for seven weeks, 2) Fast something you enjoy or do something you would make a difference in someone's life, 3) Take on a spiritual practice to help you grow deeper in your faith by participating in Bible study and read the Bible daily.

Then when Easter comes, we may become deepened in our faith and be more grateful for God's amazing love. Amen.