

Bible Passage

Exodus 19:1-9

On the third new moon after the people of Israel had gone out of the land of Egypt, on that day they came into the wilderness of Sinai. ² They set out from Rephidim and came into the wilderness of Sinai, and they encamped in the wilderness. There Israel encamped before the mountain, ³ while Moses went up to God. The Lord called to him out of the mountain, saying, “Thus you shall say to the house of Jacob, and tell the people of Israel: ⁴ ‘You yourselves have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles’ wings and brought you to myself. ⁵ Now therefore, if you will indeed obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession among all peoples, for all the earth is mine; ⁶ and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.’ These are the words that you shall speak to the people of Israel.”

⁷ So Moses came and called the elders of the people and set before them all these words that the Lord had commanded him. ⁸ All the people answered together and said, “All that the Lord has spoken we will do.” And Moses reported the words of the people to the Lord. ⁹ And the Lord said to Moses, “Behold, I am coming to you in a thick cloud, that the people may hear when I speak with you, and may also believe you forever.”

Outline

I. The Wilderness as a Crucible of Faith

- **A. The Egyptian Influence on the Israelites**
 - Enslavement and gradual immersion into the Egyptian polytheistic beliefs.
 - Contrasts between the power of the singular God of Israel and the multitude of Egyptian deities demonstrated through the plagues.
- **B. God's Refinement Process in the Wilderness**
 - The 40-year journey to instill trust, showcase His might, and reaffirm His commitment.
 - Contemporary relevance: Modern "gods" such as wealth, fame, and influence distracting us from true loyalty.
 - The human tendency to idolize and the need for true understanding and loyalty.
- **C. The Role of Law in Spiritual Guidance**
 - The significance of the Law in defining boundaries and guiding people towards a relationship with God.
 - The Law as a reflection of God's desire for genuine relationships with His people.

II. The Mediator of Loyalty

- **A. The Purpose and Limitation of the Law**
 - Providing a framework for loyalty amidst a world of multiple gods.
 - Its role as a guardian and its inability to grant true righteousness or eternal life.
- **B. The Pharisees' Misinterpretation**

- Their failure to recognize Jesus as the true embodiment of God's word due to their rigid adherence to the Law.
- **C. The Superiority of Christ's Covenant**
 - The new covenant offering a direct and genuine connection to God.
 - The importance of loyalty and devotion to God beyond mere adherence to rules.

III. Upholding Sacred Bonds of Commitment

- **A. The Evolution of God's Covenants**
 - Transition from Old Testament laws to the New Covenant in Christ.
 - God's foresight of human failure and His boundless grace exemplified through Jesus.
- **B. The Misunderstanding of Modern Believers**
 - The notion that Jesus' sacrifice means we have no role to play.
 - The reality: While salvation is a gift, following Jesus requires effort, love, and faith.
- **C. The Essence of Christian Commitment**
 - The distillation of Mosaic laws into the principle of loving one another.
 - The role of love in evangelism, community, and mission.
 - The call for believers to be recognized by the sincerity of their love, reflecting Christ's teachings and drawing others closer to God.

Notes

To truly understand the importance of the Mosaic Covenant, we must first grasp the circumstances surrounding the Israelites at that time. The Israelites, once enslaved by the Egyptians, were influenced by the culture and religion of the Egyptians. Yet even in captivity, they remained bound by the covenants of their forefathers like Abraham, which demanded specific rituals, such as male circumcision on the eighth day.

Over generations, as children weren't taught their cultural and religious heritage, they got influenced by Egyptian beliefs, which were deeply polytheistic, recognizing hundreds of gods. This contrasted starkly with the Israelites' belief in a singular, omnipotent God. This polytheistic immersion led some Israelites to question the power hierarchy among gods. Even when Moses challenged Pharaoh and his magicians performed wonders, God showcased that His power surpassed all Egyptian deities during the plagues.

Now, this is where the covenant on Mount Sinai, including the Ten Commandments, enters. This covenant's core message was God's supremacy and the importance of loyalty to Him. It served as a strong reminder that their loyalty should remain undivided, and the many laws, approximately 663 in total, were not a means to control but to guide the Israelites in their devotion. God's various covenants throughout history signify His intense desire for a genuine relationship with

His people. This wasn't about domination but about setting boundaries for a healthy relationship. We might wonder why, after freeing them from Egypt, God didn't directly guide the Israelites to the Promised Land. The reason lies in the wilderness. This 40-year detour was a phase of refinement. A time where God showcased His might, provision, and unwavering commitment to His people. A time to build trust.

In a twist of history, we today face a similar dilemma, not with Egyptian gods, but with modern "gods." The likes of wealth, fame, and influence have become today's deities. Take the influence of a celebrity like Taylor Swift. Her mere presence could divert our attention instantly, making us question our loyalty to other beliefs. The lesson here isn't about rejecting the allure of modern culture but about understanding where our core loyalty lies. Just as the Israelites needed guidance to remain devoted to God amid distractions, we too need to evaluate our loyalty in today's world filled with countless "gods." The influence of celebrities and icons in our society often diverts our focus, leading us astray from our deeper convictions and beliefs. We sometimes, knowingly or unknowingly, end up worshipping things or people that are not meant to be worshipped. But why do we easily get swayed? Perhaps it's because, at our core, humans are naturally idolatrous.

Remember, the key lies not in blind obedience but in understanding the essence of loyalty and recognizing the true source of power. True loyalty transcends

temporary distractions. Throughout history, the idea of following the Law has played a pivotal role in guiding humans in their spiritual journey. Taking a deeper dive into Galatians chapter three, Paul stresses that the Law was not against God's promises. Rather, it was meant to protect us from sin until we could embrace faith in Jesus Christ. This reflects the profound theological idea that the Law wasn't to bring life, but rather to give boundaries to people regarding a relationship with the true God. However, God knew humans, with their innate idolatrous tendencies, would falter. One might wonder then, why the Law? Well, it provided a framework, a structure for loyalty to God. In historical contexts, where every nation believed in multiple gods, the Israelites, bound by the Law, asserted their belief in one true God. This monotheistic stance set them apart, making them unique amidst a pantheon of deities.

However, the Law had its limitations. It acted as a guardian, ensuring adherence, but it couldn't provide true righteousness or eternal life. And here's where the twist comes in: during the time of Jesus, the Pharisees, who were supposed to be the mediators of the Law, failed to recognize Jesus for who He was – the true embodiment of God's word. Their love for the Law blinded them from recognizing the Lord.

Thankfully, believers no longer need mediators like the Pharisees. Instead, we have Christ. As stated in Hebrews chapter eight, Christ's covenant is superior, built on better promises. Unlike the old covenant which people

couldn't adhere to, the new one, mediated by Christ, offers a more genuine connection with God. In essence, our focus shouldn't be on the Law itself but on what the Law teaches us – to be loyal and devoted to the Lord. God's relationship with His people has always been predicated on love and the desire for a genuine bond. In the Old Testament, laws were established not as mere restrictions, but as guidelines to strengthen our bond with Him. However, God foresaw our failures in upholding these laws. Instead of forsaking us, He introduced a new covenant, highlighting His boundless grace and understanding of human frailties.

This New Covenant isn't about adhering to a stringent set of rules or performing works to earn salvation. It's about God's unwavering commitment to humanity, exemplified in Jesus Christ. Through Christ, God seeks to write His words directly on our hearts, eliminating the need for external law enforcement. Jesus's sacrifice on the cross shifted the paradigm from humans striving to maintain a relationship with God to God Himself bridging that gap. This new approach isn't about us working hard to be worthy, but about trusting and following Jesus's path of love and sacrifice.

But there's a misinterpretation prevalent in modern times: many believe that since Jesus did everything, there's nothing left for them to do. This apathy is a concern. While it's true that Jesus accomplished the work required for our salvation, our role as followers remains. Following Jesus requires effort, love, and faith. The

Mosaic laws, which were extensive and detailed, have been distilled into one core principle in the New Covenant: love one another.

This love is the very foundation of the church's existence. We are called to exalt God and extend that love to others. Evangelism, which many shy away from, isn't about forceful preaching, but about genuinely showing the love of Jesus. Community activities and mission trips aren't about ticking a box; they're about expressing God's love in tangible ways.

In essence, our focus should be singular: embodying the love Jesus taught us. The world should recognize us not by how strictly we follow laws but by the depth and sincerity of our love. It's not about how much we work, but how much we love. Let's recommit to this principle and let our love be the beacon that draws others closer to God.