

It could be argued they were in the gray area. The money provided a service to all the travelers coming into Jerusalem from outside the area. They would need money in the local currency. Coins changing hands and being weighed out wasn't quiet though. Across the way were vendors selling animals for sacrifice. Every kind needed for every kind of sacrifice. Cattle mooing, sheep calling, and doves cooing. The vendors calling out trying to attract attention to their shop, their animals, to make some money. All of this noise and distraction going on while pilgrims were trying to make it into the temple for the annual Passover in the temple. No chance for quiet worship time with God though.

Jesus did see it as gray area though. As the whip came down he was making it clear what he wanted. They needed to get out. But was it harsh? You can hear those in the temple grumbling. "Take it easy man. We're just trying to do our job. These people need what we offer. What's the big deal?" The Passover laws were clear, what the merchants offered was clear. What was gray area was where they should offer it. Did it have to be the temple courtyard?

Gray area in the law can usually be found. In Old Testament laws there was just the sheer number of laws to keep. Lots of potential gray areas. So we look for what's most important, what's the minimum. Simple yet direct absolute principles that can be applied in all situations. Brief yet comprehensive. God responds with the 10 commandments. It's more than a code of ethics. More was happening that day when the mountain was covered in smoke and shook violently from God's presence. We look at the moment these commandments were given to Moses and to the world in the first lesson. We find out...

**God's serious about all 10  
Rescued to love God  
Rescued to love neighbor**

Before he spoke any of the 10, God wanted the people to understand why they could even hear him. **"I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery."** God took them back to the greatest rescue mission they ever experienced. The people needed to remember they would still be slaves in Egypt if not for God's rescue. They owed their very existence to him. Based on his rescue of them from slavery God proclaimed stipulations. These would be the things they could do to render complete submission and allegiance to God in everything.

Talk to anyone about the basic message of the 10 commandments and they'll probably tell you they've got them. There are only 10, right. I'm not driving a stolen vehicle. I'm still married to my spouse. I haven't killed anyone. Doing well. But read the first command again. **"You shall have no other gods before me. You shall not make for yourself an idol in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the water below. You shall not bow down to them or worship them."** Now be honest with yourself. Has God always been number one in your life? Have you always been eager to give him time in worship or share your wealth with him? The honest answer is you and I haven't been living up to God's perfect standard. We've fallen short in sin. Already there's no peace between us and God.

Having fallen short we're in danger. There are 10 commandments but from our perspective there may as well be 10 thousand. We haven't kept one. We need rescue. Enter the LORD. **"I am the LORD your God."** We weren't rescued from Egypt but we were rescued from slavery. We were slaves to sin until God rescued us. The God of free and faithful love showed us undeserved and unearned love in Christ. Lent makes the need for a Savior perfectly clear. Just read the 10 commandments and you'll see how you've sinned. Then hear the gospel spoken by Paul to see how you're saved. **"We preach Christ crucified...the power of God and the wisdom of God."** Christ crucified is God's rescue of you from sin. What Jesus did for us on the cross we can never tire of hearing.

If the Israelites had decided to turn and head straight back to Egypt after being rescued they would be throwing God's rescue right back in his face. Basically saying we don't need you or your rescue. Don't go running back to the slavery of sin. By the power of God in Christ you can keep God number one in your life. You can give time and resources to God with joy and happiness. One hour seems like nothing when compared with the love God demonstrated in Christ to you and the rescue he brought about for you. Then one hour can hardly begin to demonstrate our thanks and love God. By his power we've been rescued to love God.

In the stained glass of the church building where I grew up there was an image of two tablets of stone. On them were Roman numerals, three on the left side and seven on the right. Perhaps you've seen a similar picture. I always wondered why not five and five. During catechism class I found out. God speaks about himself in three, and our neighbor in seven. God's serious about all 10 because we've been rescued to love our neighbor too.

As serious as God is about the 10 commandments he doesn't need your obedience. He's completely independent. He doesn't need you or me to keep the commandments so he can be happy. Besides we're breaking them all the time so how happy could he really be? God has another reason why he rescued us, our neighbors need our obedience. We need our neighbor's obedience too. When we keep the commandments of God our neighbor benefits. When our neighbor keeps the commandments we experience a better life.

The first of the commands regarding our neighbor really isn't talking about the neighbor at all but parents. You've been commanded to love your neighbor, but God commands something else for parents. **"Honor your father and your mother, so that you may live long in the land the Lord your God is giving you."** Whether your parents are good or bad doesn't matter. God doesn't give you an escape clause. You're to honor them no matter what because they're God's representative. When you honor them you honor God.

The rest of the 10 don't seem that hard. They're short and sweet and all focused on our neighbor. **"You shall not murder, you shall not commit adultery, you shall not steal, you shall not give false testimony against your neighbor, you shall not covet your neighbor's house."** Martin Luther gave us a simple explanation of these commandments many of you memorized as children. But Jesus first helped us realize God isn't just looking at actions, he's looking at hearts. Jesus said about murder, **"I tell you that anyone who is angry with his brother will be subject to judgment."** How many of you have been angry with someone before? Jesus said about adultery, **"I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart."** Stealing includes any dishonest dealings. False testimony involves protection of reputation and how we take what others say. And coveting is any wicked intention we have to get what doesn't belong to us or what God hasn't given us. God's serious about all 10 and we haven't kept one.

It is the Savior God who gives these commands to us. It is also the Savior God who kept them all for us. Jesus kept each one for us perfectly. Every time we hated, Jesus never hated. Every time we looked at someone not our spouse, Jesus never lusted. Every time we coveted what someone had, Jesus never did. Jesus actively lived his life perfectly to make one important payment. His death was the culmination of his perfect life. On the cross the payment was made and our sins were done away with.

We come to the understanding that we're completely and totally sinful. We deserve punishment to the third and fourth generation for our sins. But God gave us his grace and turned our lives around. Now we owe him obedience not based on trying to earn favor but on already having it. That obedience is faith. And God promises love. **"But showing love to a thousand generations of those who love me and keep my commandments."** Grace and blessing is promised to all who keep these commandments. We're rescued to keep these commandments. We're rescued to love our neighbor.

10 commandments don't seem like a lot but there's no gray area. God's serious about all 10. We can't throw them out just because we can't keep them perfectly. God is the one who had to do something to change our future. He had to keep every law himself. That's why he sent Jesus. Jesus kept each commandment and all God's other commands perfectly. Then hanging on the cross he paid with his perfect life. God rescued us out of love. Now we love him and our neighbors in response to God's rescue.