

May 4, 2003  
AM Service  
Patchogue Church of the Nazarene

Living for Another Life  
Ex 19:9a & 20:1-3 (NLT)

Then the LORD said to Moses, "I am going to come to you in a thick cloud so the people themselves can hear me as I speak to you

Ex 20:1-3

Then God instructed the people as follows:

2 "I am the LORD your God, who rescued you from slavery in Egypt.

3 "Do not worship any other gods besides me.

We seem to think that the Lord only spoke to Moses. Then Moses communicated to the people what he claimed God told him. If that were the case some may be tempted to think that Moses went up on a mountain made up these things and told the people he heard from God. But in these verses notice an interesting thing that you may not have realized before. In Ex 19: 9 The Lord tells Moses that the people themselves will hear Him speak. And Ex 20 says that God instructed the people. In other words, the people heard the voice of God giving what we now call the Ten Commandments. Did you ever wish you could actually hear the voice of God? I mean in an audible voice? Boy, that would be something wouldn't it?

When I was an Assistant Pastor at the Valley Steam Church of the Nazarene I had an office in a house that was once the parsonage but was converted into offices. The house was on a corner so it faced a main road and had a large front yard. To the left of the house was another road (the front of the church faced that road). Behind the house was the side of the church and on the right of the house was a narrow area between the house and a fence separating it from the back of some houses on the next block. There were a lot of shrubs and trees, so it was a secluded area. My office was right next to this secluded area. There was a small shed toward the front of the house then a long narrow piece of land that went straight back along the side of the house and along the entire back of the church.

One summer we had a program for kids out in the front yard. A teen had volunteered to come and work in this program. He would come to the church on his bike and he'd keep the bike behind the shed. I guess he figured no one could see it so it would be safe there.

One day from my office I could hear two young boys outside in this narrow area. They had come behind the buildings and, I guess, were going to peek on what the kids were doing on the front lawn, when they came upon bike. They didn't think anyone could see or hear them, but from my office I could hear them whispering to one another. One said, "Hey look a bike. Let's take it." The other said, "They're people right out front." Then the first, "So what, they can't see us. Come on, let's take it." Then I said in a deep voice,

“Is that your bike? (Thou shall not steal!)” I don’t know if they thought they were hearing the voice of God but they left the bike and took off running as if they had.

## 1. Revelations

God has revealed Himself to us.

- a. He actually spoke to the Israelites and before He did ...
- b. He made His presence known to them with a (Ex 19:16-18) powerful thunder and lightning storm, and a dense cloud came down upon the mountain... 18 All Mount Sinai was covered with smoke because the LORD had descended on it in the form of fire. The smoke billowed into the sky like smoke from a furnace, and the whole mountain shook with a violent earthquake.
- c. We have a written account of these events in the Bible, which has proved itself over and over again as a trustworthy book.
- d. Ultimately God revealed Himself when He came to the earth in the person of Jesus Christ.

## 2. Requirements

- a. Jesus summed up the first and greatest Commandment as (Matt 22:37) “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind (and strength).”
- b. In the Ten Commandments the first commandment is: "I am the LORD your God, ...Do not worship any other gods besides me.”

“Besides me” means “side by side with Me” or “in addition to Me.” God didn’t expect Israel to give Him up, but the danger was in them giving equal allegiance to other gods. Probably few of us have ever bowed down physically before idols of wood or stone, but we all have had our idols: whether persons, occupations, pleasures, possessions, money, ourselves, our image or anything that competes with God for first place.

- c. God requires our undivided affection and devotion. Why should God be primary in our life? Because He is God and He said so? Because it’s the law and we must obey by cold choice? No, but rather it is because He loves us and as we grow in our relationship with Him we love this God Who has done so much for us. There is no true happiness apart from God. Those who seek joy elsewhere break the first commandment, and end up in misery and tragedy. There is a hunger in every soul to *connect*, and if fully felt, it will drive us to God. Unfortunately there is a stubborn determination in every soul to satisfy that hunger elsewhere.

## 3. Rewards

God tells us that all who love Him will obey Him and He will reward those persons. The problem for many is that we have to wait until heaven for those rewards.

- a. Did you know there are rewards in heaven?

Matt 5:11-12

"Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. 12 Rejoice and be glad, because *great is your reward in heaven...*"

Matt 16:27

For the Son of Man is going to come in his Father's glory with his angels, and then *he will reward each person according to what he has done.*

Matt 19:21

Jesus answered, "If you want to be perfect, go, sell your possessions and give to the poor, and *you will have treasure in heaven.* Then come, follow me."

These verses indicate that God is keeping track of what you do for Him and will reward you in heaven for what you do. *Belief* determines where you spend eternity but *behavior* determines how you will spend eternity. Obedience to God is hard and many times is learned through suffering. For many obeying God is difficult because of suffering. We go through much pain and suffering in this world and blame God or refuse to have faith in God because of it. Obeying God sometimes means denying ourselves the pleasurable but sinful vices of this world. Why is it so hard to obey God and find happiness in doing so?

- b. We will not be happy about obeying God until our attitude toward sin has changed. We must come to a place where we hate what God hates and love what God loves. But what also is needed to be happy about obeying God is this belief that obeying God will mean rewards ... in heaven. This will help us endure suffering.
- c. Jesus chose suffering. He said (John 10:18 NLT), "No one can take my life from me. I lay down my life voluntarily."

We are to be like Jesus. How can we face even chose suffering for the sake of obeying God? Well, Why would Jesus choose suffering? The answer is found in Heb 12:2 "Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who *for the joy set before him endured the cross.*" It is the hope and joy of rewards in heaven that helps us to endure the pain of this life.

A long time ago a friend of mine was telling me about a conversation he had with his unbelieving brother. His brother said, "What if you are wrong? What if there is no God? What if there is no heaven?" My friend said to his brother, "Let's look at it this way. If you are right and there is no God and no heaven then I lived a good life trying to love others as best I could and when I die I will be put in a grave and if there is no resurrection of the dead I wouldn't know the difference anyway, so what do I lose. But if I am right and you are wrong you have a lot more to lose." I thought that was a pretty good argument. I read a similar argument recently. It was a story about a monk who was interviewed on television. The interviewer was especially interested in the tradition of

the monks of living in silence and solitude. So he asked the monk, “And what if you were to realize at the end of your life that atheism is true, that there is no God? Tell me, what if it were true? The monk replied, “Holiness, silence, and sacrifice are beautiful in themselves, even without promise of reward. I still will have used my life well.”

Now that sounds all well and good and very touching and spiritually romantic, but look at something Paul said (1 Cor 15:19) If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are to be pitied more than all men.

Did you get that? It is just the opposite of the monk’s statement. Paul had suffered much in his life as a Christian and mostly because he chose to remain a Christian. He could have prevented a lot of suffering if he went back to not being a follower of Jesus. In a sense he chose to suffer. If Paul would have been able to be interviewed on television and the interviewer was to say to Paul, “And what if you were to realize at the end of your life that atheism is true, that there is no God? Tell me, what if it were true? What if there is no resurrection from the dead? What if there was no heaven?” Paul would have said, “Well, then we Christians are to be pitied as the most miserable people in the world.” As a matter of fact Paul says (1 Cor 15:32), “If the dead are not raised, ‘Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die.’”

Why would Paul say such a thing? Why would he choose a life of suffering? For surly his life was not one of ease and prosperity as a Christian. Perhaps that is part of the answer. Christians who are living a life of relative ease and prosperity can say, “Well, if there is no God and no heaven, no big deal I had a good life anyway. But Paul did not have an easy life. What caused him to endure? The answer is found in 1 Cor 15:20. After saying in verse 19, “If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are to be pitied more than all men.” He says in verse 20, “But the fact is that Christ has been raised from the dead. He has become the first of a great harvest of those who will be raised to life again.”

- d. Paul’s belief in God, his confidence in the resurrection, and his hope in eternal fellowship with Christ, did not result in a life of comfort, and ease that would have been satisfying even if there were no resurrection. But because of that hope he was able to choose suffering, endure this life and joyfully serve his God.

We need to live our lives with the same strong confidence and hope in heaven, and the rewards our behavior will earn us there. We don’t earn heaven. Heaven is a gift to all who believe Jesus. But our behavior will earn us rewards there. So...as Paul told the Colossians (Col 3:1-4 NLT) “Since you have been raised to new life with Christ, set your sights on the realities of heaven, where Christ sits at God’s right hand in the place of honor and power. 2 Let heaven fill your thoughts. Do not think only about things down here on earth. 3 For you died when Christ died, and your real life is hidden with Christ in God. 4 And when Christ, who is your real life, is revealed to the whole world, you will share in all his glory.

Or as Jesus said (Matt 6:19-21 NLT) "Don't store up treasures here on earth, where they can be eaten by moths and get rusty, and where thieves break in and steal. 20 Store your treasures in heaven, where they will never become moth-eaten or rusty and where they will be safe from thieves. 21 Wherever your treasure is, there your heart and thoughts will also be.

In other words, live for heaven! That's living for another life.