

The Ten: Drawing Near with Fear and Faith

Dr. John Carmichael

[Exo 20:1-2, 18-21 NASB95] 1 Then God spoke all these words, saying, 2 "I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. ... 18 All the people perceived the thunder and the lightning flashes and the sound of the trumpet and the mountain smoking; and when the people saw [it,] they trembled and stood at a distance. 19 Then they said to Moses, "Speak to us yourself and we will listen; but let not God speak to us, or we will die." 20 Moses said to the people, "Do not be afraid; for God has come in order to test you, and in order that the fear of Him may remain with you, so that you may not sin." 21 So the people stood at a distance, while Moses approached the thick cloud where God [was.]

- Shock and awe: "Awesome sights and sounds came from Mount Sinai together with the speaking of the law. All of the phenomena together made for an overwhelming scene." (Guzik)
- The people drew back. They chose a mediator not out of faith, but out of fear. Moses drew near to God even in the darkness.
- As God, causes us to live with these Ten, He is actually calling us to come to close to Him through Jesus Christ.

What does this scene teach us about how to live out the Ten Commandments?

Here are five lessons that this scene teaches us about how to live out the Ten Commandments.

I. The Awe of God's Presence Drives Holy Fear

- a. V.18
- b. The physical manifestations of God's glory—thunder, lightning, trumpet blast, smoke—reflect His absolute holiness and majesty. The people's fear was not irrational; it was the correct response to a holy God revealing Himself.
- c. [Heb 12:28-29 NASB95] 28 Therefore, since we receive a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us show gratitude, by which we may offer to God an acceptable service with reverence and awe; 29 for our God is a consuming fire.
- d. The fear of the Lord is not about running away—it's about standing in reverent awe, ready for obedience. We must cultivate a Spirit-led awareness of God's holiness that moves us to worship and surrender.

II. The People Stood Afar Off – Fear Without Faith Creates Distance

- a. V.18b–19
- b. Rather than drawing near, they chose a mediator—not out of faith, but out of fear. Their hearts were not prepared for intimacy with God. Fear without trust leads to spiritual distance.
- c. "What Israel dreaded; Moses coveted (Exodus 33:18)." (Cole)
- d. [Jhn 1:14, 18 NASB95] 14 And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth. ... 18 No one has seen God at any time; the only begotten God who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained [Him.]
- e. [Heb 4:16 NASB95] 16 Therefore let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.
- f. Man's desire for a mediator — someone to act as a go-between with us and God — is only good if it is fulfilled in Jesus Christ, for there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus (1 Timothy 2:5). (Guzik)

The Ten: Drawing Near with Fear and Faith

Dr. John Carmichael

- g. Jesus is our better Mediator, and through the Spirit we are invited into the Holy of Holies. Don't let fear of unworthiness keep you from God. The Spirit cries within us, "Abba, Father!" (Rom. 8:15)

III. Do Not Be Afraid – Godly Fear Produces Holiness

- a. V. 20
- b. Moses clarifies: this is not fear that drives us away, but fear that keeps us from sin. God's testing isn't punitive—it's purifying. He wants a holy people who revere Him above all.
- c. [1Pe 1:6-7 NASB95] 6 In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials, 7 so that the proof of your faith, [being] more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ;
- d. [Mat 10:28 NASB95] 28 "Do not fear those who kill the body but are unable to kill the soul; but rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.
- e. [2Co 7:1 NASB95] 1 Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.
- f. The Holy Spirit doesn't just comfort; He convicts, cleanses, and calls us to a life of sanctified fire. Holiness is not optional—it's the Spirit's fruit in us.

IV. Moses Drew Near – God Desires Relationship, Not Just Reverence

- a. V. 21
 - b. Moses, a type of Christ and a man of intimacy with God, shows that proximity is possible. Even in the "thick darkness," God is present. The call is always to draw near, not shrink back. Israel dreaded the powerful presence of God, but Moses longed for it. (Guzik)
 - c. [Jas 4:8 NASB95] 8 Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded.
 - d. [2Co 3:18 NASB95] 18 But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit.
 - e. Where others see mystery and fear, the Spirit-filled believer sees invitation. God wants a people who will press in—through the cloud, into His presence. The secret place belongs to those who seek Him.
- **There is a holy tension in God's presence—fear and invitation, glory and grace. The New Covenant doesn't abolish the awe of Sinai, it fulfills it through Christ. Pentecostal believers are called to live in both the fire of God's holiness and the freedom of His grace.**