

“Rule of Christian life”, Exodus 20:1-17 (03/07/2021)

(Slide 1) Lately I read an article about “the secret of longevity”. I think living a long and healthy life is everyone’s interest, so this article was very interesting to me as well. It introduces four famous longevity villages in different countries: Okinawa, Japan; the Italian islands of Sardinia; Hainan, China; and Sunchang, South Korea. Interestingly, even though each village was located in totally different topography terrain, they have several things in common for longevity: eat little, avoid salty and fatty food, and moderate labor and exercise. This means that longevity is not determined by regional characteristics, but lifestyle and habit are more important for a longer life. To live a longer and better life, also to live well together in the community, people set up certain rules of life and follow them.

(Slide 2) Think about your home, you may have various unofficial rules in your house: Mom is always right, and father is almost right. Put the dishes in the sink after eating and turn off the lights when you leave. Also, in the church, we don’t eat, and we don’t talk on the phone during the service. Likewise, although they are invisible, those rules help us to live accordingly.

(Slide 3) Today, through the story of the Ten Commandments, we see how God led the people of Israel to live accordingly as God’s people. Basically, the Ten Commandments were written based solely on what God spoke to God’s people directly. And this shows us the fundamental principles of living in the covenantal relationship with God. Therefore, at that time, for the people of Israel, the Ten Commandments were the things that they must follow. However, it is not important anymore for today’s Christians. Even if we know much about the content and history of the Ten Commandments, no one really tries to take and follow them seriously. This is firstly because, since Jesus abolished all of the law, we think that we don’t have to follow the Ten Commandments anymore. Secondly, times have changed, our lives now seem totally different from the time of Moses, so we think it is almost

impossible to apply them in our current setting. Thirdly, the Ten Commandments sound like orders, which makes people feel uncomfortable to follow. Nevertheless, still, it is worthwhile to think about why God gave the Ten Commandments to God's people and how we-today's Christians-understand and apply them to our current life.

The Ten Commandments start with the saying: "I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery." This clearly shows the relationship between God and the people of Israel. After the exodus liberation until they arrived at the wilderness of Sinai, for about two months, the people of Israel had experienced vividly how God was working in them. They witnessed a pillar of cloud and fire leading them. They crossed the Red Sea, which parted like land. They could drink the waters of the Marah, which was bitter but became good. They were provided enough food - Manna from heaven each day. They drank water that came from the rock at Meribah. And by the help of God, they defeated Amalek at Rephidim. From this, the people of Israel experienced a God who will always be with them, lead them, guide them, protect them, provide for them and save them. After this, God made a covenant with them and gave them the Ten Commandments as the details of the covenant. To help them to live as holy people of God, God gave them the Ten Commandments. However, there is one thing that we misunderstand about this, which is that only if they follow the Ten Commandments, they will be saved and considered holy people. However, they were already saved and considered holy people by the grace of God. They had to follow the Ten Commandments not to be saved, but to be thankful for God's grace.

(Slide 4) And this is the same today. Although we are not good enough to be accepted as children of God, we are already accepted by God. Although we don't pay any price, we are saved by God. This is only possible by the grace of God. Therefore, we should live accordingly as children of God and as saved people by God. The Ten Commandments are good guidance, showing us the way of holy living in God. However, we have another commandment that Jesus gave us to

follow, which is “love God and love our neighbors as ourselves.”
(Slide 5)

Then, does it mean that we have two different commandments – one from God and another from Jesus? No, actually the real foundation of both commandments is the same. It is love. The first commandment of Jesus Christ - “you shall love the lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, all your strength, and all your mind” is related to the first four commandments of God: “You shall have no other gods before me; You shall not make for yourself an idol; You shall not make wrongful use of the name of the Lord; Remember the Sabbath Day and keep it holy.” They have relevance to love God. And the second commandment of Jesus – “you shall love your neighbor as yourself” is related to the last six commandments of God: “Honor your father and mother; You shall not kill; You shall not commit adultery; You shall not steal; You shall not bear false witness; You shall not covet.” They have relevance to love our neighbors. Ultimately, the Ten Commandments are the commandments of love God and love our neighbors. They teach us concretely and practically how we love God and love our neighbors. Likewise, commandments from God and Jesus are the basic guidelines for faith and holy living. However, still sometimes we feel that it’s hard to keep our faith and holy living in this fast-paced, frenzied, and complex world.

(Slide 6) John Wesley knew how difficult it would be for his followers, particularly those recently converted, to live a holy life. To this end, he created structures and practices that would help foster faithful living in the members of the Methodist Societies. In 1743 he outlined these practices in the "General Rules," which functioned as a sort of contract by which group members held one another accountable. These rules are organized into these three basic categories: 1. Do no harm, "avoiding evil of all kinds"; 2. Do good, "of every possible sort, and as far as possible, to all;" 3. Practice "the ordinances of God," or engage in individual and communal spiritual practices such as prayer, Bible reading, worship and the Lord's Supper. And one of the former bishops of the UMC, Rueben Job introduced three simple rules based on

this Wesleyan way of living. **“Do no harm, do good, stay in love with God.”** God, who is love itself and came to us as a human to show us his love in the most humble way and died and resurrected for us, wants us to think, act, speak, live and love accordingly.

(Slide 7) During this season of Lent, I hope you set up at least one particular rule of life for holy living. What can we practice to live holy? What can we do to love God and love our neighbors? How can we live by doing no harm, doing good, and staying in love with God? Let us find it in prayer and try to practice it throughout our daily living during this season of Lent. Let us live accordingly as holy people of God.

Praise God. Amen.