THE TALE OF TWO MOUNTAINS

**DATE: 4/1/2015 Wed.**

**TEXT: Hebrews 12:18-24; Exodus 19**

**INTRODUCTION**

Let’s stand for the reading of the Word of God

This section contains one of the most powerful contrasts to be found in the Word of God

Paul draws a sharp contrast between Sinai, the earthly mountain where the Law was given …

And Sion, the heavenly mount – the home of the righteous

The writer says in **v.18 –** *“****For ye are not come unto the mount that might be touched, and that burned with fire, nor unto blackness, and darkness, and tempest,”***

And in contrast just a few verses later in **v.22,** he says – *“****But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God …”***

What a contrast there is between Sinai and Sion

By looking at these two mountains we will see the vast difference between Law and Grace

I want to preach on this thought …

**“THE TALE OF TWO MOUNTAINS”**

Let’s read **vs. 18-24…**

Let’s pray

**~~~Prayer~~~**

**I. THE FIERCE WRATH OF SINAI – vs. 19 -21**

Paul cont. to reference the OT here … **Exodus 19**

The giving of the law at Sinai created a scene of terror,

Both in what was Seen and what was Felt

At Sinai God demonstrated His Absolute Holiness and man's inability to approach Him

Most people simply don’t understand the Holiness of God

Because if they did, there would be a totally different attitude toward God

First, Paul relates …

**A. The Sight – v.18**

***“For ye are not come unto the mount that might be touched, and that burned with fire, nor unto blackness, and darkness, and tempest,”***

I really like those words - ***“for ye are not come...”***

I'm glad that we don't have to approach God by way of the Law

We are told that Mount Sinai burned with fire when God gave the Ten Commandments

What a sight it must have been as the fire burned and the smoke engulfed the mountain

There was ***“blackness and darkness”***

On top of all of that … there was thunder, lightning and a tempest along with a great earth quake

Here’s how Moses described it in **Exodus 19:16, 18 -**   
  
***“And it came to pass on the third day in the morning, that there were thunders and lightnings, and a thick cloud upon the mount, and the voice of the trumpet exceeding loud; so that all the people that was in the camp trembled” “And mount Sinai was altogether on a smoke, because the LORD descended upon it in fire: and the smoke thereof ascended as the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mount quaked greatly”***

What a sight! The people were exceedingly fearful

They had never seen anything like this

And Paul says in **v.21 - *“And so terrible was the sight, that Moses said, I exceedingly fear and quake”***

Paul assumes because it was so frightful …

That even Moses feared and shook along with the others

Then Paul relates …

**B. The Sound – v.19**

***“And the sound of a trumpet, and the voice of words; which voice they that heard intreated that the word should not be spoken to them any more:”***

God's voice is compared to the sound of a trumpet

Moses described it in **Ex. 19:16** as... ***“the voice of the trumpet exceeding loud; so that all the people that was in the camp trembled”***

So great and fearful was God's voice that the people...

***“intreated that the word should not be spoken to them any more:”***

The word ***“intreated”*** carries the idea of *pleading*

They *pleaded* with Moses to speak to them … rather than God

They said unto Moses in **Ex. 20:19 – *“Speak thou with us, and we will hear: but let not God speak with us, lest we die”***

The trumpet is often used in Scripture to describe God's voice …

**I Thess. 4:16 – *“For the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first:”***

**I Cor. 15:52 – *“In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound,***

***…and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed”***

**Rev. 4:1 – *“After this I looked, and, behold, a door was opened in heaven: and the first voice which I heard was as it were of a trumpet talking with me; which said, Come up hither, and I will shew thee things which must be hereafter”***

… And God's ensuing judgment

**Rev. 8:2 - *“And I saw the seven angels which stood before God; and to them were given seven trumpets”***

Everything about the sight and sound of Sinai reminds man that God is holy and cannot be approached by our own means

**C. The Separation – vs.20, 21**

***“(For they could not endure that which was commanded, And if so much as a beast touch the mountain, it shall be stoned, or thrust through with a dart:”  “And so terrible was the sight, that Moses said, I exceedingly fear and quake:)”***

The Law so separated the people from God that they couldn't even set their foot on the border of the mountain

**Exodus 19:12, 13 – *“And thou shalt set bounds unto the people round about, saying, Take heed to yourselves, that ye go not up into the mount, or touch the border of it: whosoever toucheth the mount shall be surely put to death:”***

***“There shall not an hand touch it, but he shall surely be stoned, or shot through; whether it be beast or man, it shall not live: when the trumpet soundeth long, they shall come up to the mount”***

Think about that!

Man is so separated from God that they couldn't even touch the mount upon which He dwelt

Just to touch it meant certain death

What a riveting sight as the Israelites with fear and trembling witnessed the terrifying act of God as He gave the Law to Moses

What a difference to the day of grace

The Israelites had to stand afar off and not even touch the mountain

Yet, because of the finished work of Christ we are invited to... **Heb. 4:16 - *“come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need”***

The Law offered no mercy or opportunity for help

All the Law could do was show man his sin, find him guilty and condemn him to death

**THE FIERCE WRATH OF SINAI**

**II. THE EXPLANATION OF THE LAW**

I’m afraid that there is a total misunderstanding about the part the Law plays in God’s Plan

There is a great debate over Law and Grace

There are those today who say *it is all of Grace and it doesn’t matter how you behave after salvation*

The other side counters - *That idea leads to lawlessness, God’s righteous standard in the Law must be upheld*

And someone else chimes in with - *Salvation is by grace, but grace only comes to those who obey God’s Law*

Understand … we are saved by Grace thru Faith

**Ephesians 2:8, 9 – *“For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God:   
 Not of works, lest any man should boast”***

**Titus 3:5 – *“Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost;”***

There is no way in which we merit salvation!

We always fall short of God’s righteous standard

**A. What the Law Is**

When the Bible speaks of “The Law,” it is referring to the detailed standard God gave to Moses

… Beginning in **Ex. 20** with the Ten Commandments

God’s Law explained His requirements for a holy people and included 3 categories: civil, ceremonial, and moral

The Law was given to separate God’s people, Israel

… from the evil nations around them and to define sin

**Ezra 10:11 – *“Now therefore make confession unto the LORD God of your fathers, and do His pleasure: and separate yourselves from the people of the land”***

**Romans 5:13 – *“For until the law sin was in the world: but sin is not imputed [understood] when there is no law”***

The Law also clearly demonstrated that no human being could purify himself enough to please God

The Law revealed our need for a Saviour

**B. What the Law Isn’t**

Lost men will always misinterpret the Word of God

**I Corinthians 2:14 –** ***“But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned”***

By NT times, the religious leaders had hijacked the Law and added their own rules and traditions

**Mark 7:7-9 – *“Howbeit in vain do they worship Me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men”   
“For laying aside the commandment of God, ye hold the tradition of men, as the washing of pots and cups: and many other such like things ye do” “And He said unto them, Full well [it’s no doubt] ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your own tradition”***

While the Law itself was good, it was weak in that it lacked the power to change a sinful heart

**Romans 8:3a – *“For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh …”***

Keeping the Law, as interpreted by the Pharisees, had become the norm

**Luke 11:46 – *“And He said, Woe unto you also, ye lawyers! for ye lade men with burdens grievous to be borne, and ye yourselves touch not the burdens with one of your fingers”***

It was into this legalistic climate that Jesus came,

Conflict with the hypocritical authority of the Law was inevitable

But Jesus, the Lawgiver, said –

**Matthew 5:17 – *“Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them”***

The Law was not evil

It served as a mirror …

… to reveal the condition of a person’s heart

**Romans 7:7 -** ***“What shall we say then? Is the law sin? God forbid. Nay, I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet”***

**Galatians 3:24 –** ***“Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith”***

**John 1:17** says - ***“For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ”***

Jesus embodied the perfect balance between Grace and the Law

**John 1:14 – *“And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only Begotten of the Father,) full of Grace and Truth”***

**THE FIERCE WRATH OF SINAI**

**THE EXPLANATION OF THE LAW**

**III. THE FAVORABLE WAY OF SION – vs. 22-24**

Now back to our text

Paul continues to contrast the old with the new to show the superiority of Grace over Law

Sion is symbolic of the heavenly Jerusalem where we will enjoy the blessings and realities of the new covenant

The earthly mount of Sion (or Zion), was the site of the city of Jerusalem

**Matthew 21:5 – *“Tell ye the daughter of Sion, Behold, thy King cometh unto thee, meek, and sitting upon an ass, and a colt the foal of an ass”***

**John 12:15 – *“Fear not, daughter of Sion: behold, thy King cometh, sitting on an ass's colt”***

**Romans 11:26 – *“And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob:”***

**I Peter 2:6 – *“Wherefore also it is contained in the scripture, Behold, I lay in Sion a chief corner stone, elect, precious: and he that believeth on Him shall not be confounded”***

Sion was the center of government and religion for Israel

It represented the Presence of God

As Mount Sinai symbolized God's dealings with men under the Mosaic Law,

Mount Sion symbolizes the Grace and Salvation of God under the New covenant

**A. The City of God – v.22**

***“But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels,”***

Notice the present tense of the words ***“ye are come”***

For the NT believer, Heaven is a Present Possession, not a Future Prospect

Heaven is something that we can have and be assured of right now

**I John 5:13 – *“These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God”***

Along with salvation there is personal assurance of Heaven

This is the city of the Living God, the Heavenly Jerusalem...

What a place this must be!

**1.** The Dwelling of God

**Rev. 21:22, 23 – *“And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it” “And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof”***

**2.** Future Home of the Church

**Rev. 21:2 – *“And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband”***

**3.** Preparations are now underway

**John 14:1-3 – *“Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in Me” In My Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you” “I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto Myself; that where I am, there ye may be also”***

A full description of this wonderful city is found in **Rev. 21**

The New Jerusalem is the city whose builder and maker is God

It is the eternal home of every believer

**B. The Church of God – v.23**

***“To the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect,”***

The word ***“firstborn”*** speaks of all church age believers

It signifies that only those who have been born again will have a part in Heaven

They are those who are ***“written in heaven”***

This, no doubt refers to the Lamb's book of life

**Rev. 21:27 – *“And there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life”***

**C. The Covenant of God – v.24**

***“And to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel”***

Jesus is the mediator of the New Covenant

Mediator - *somebody who works with both sides in a dispute in an attempt to help them to reach an agreement*

Christ's blood and ministry surpasses by far that of the Law

The Law could not reconcile man to God, but Jesus does

**I Timothy 2:5 – *“For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus;”***

**Hebrews 9:13, 14 – *“For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh:” “How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?”***

The pure Blood of Christ does that which the blood of animals could never do

The animal sacrifices of the Law only served as ceremonial types of the coming Christ

The Blood of Christ however cleanses and washes away sin

**John 1:29 – *“The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world”***

Only thru the Blood of Jesus Christ can sin be taken away

**CONCLUSION**

There is no conflict between Grace and the Law …

When it is properly understood

Christ fulfilled the Law on our behalf and offers the power of the Holy Spirit, who motivates a regenerated heart to live in obedience to Him

**Matthew 3:8 – *“Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance:”***

**Acts 1:8 – *“But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth”***

**1 Thessalonians 1:5 – *“For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance; as ye know what manner of men we were among you for your sake”***

**II Tim. 1:14 – “*That good thing which was committed unto thee keep by the Holy Ghost which dwelleth in us”***

**James 2:26** says **– *“For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also”***

A Grace that has the power to save also has the power to motivate a sinful heart toward godliness

Where there is no desire to be godly, there is no saving faith   
  
The keeping of the Law cannot save anyone

**Romans 3:20 – *“Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in His sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin”***

**Titus 3:5 – *“Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost;”***

In fact, those who claim righteousness on the basis of their keeping of the Law only *think* they’re keeping the Law

The purpose of the Law was, basically, to bring us to Christ

**Galatians 3:24 – *“Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith”***

Once we are saved, God desires to glorify Himself through our good works

**Matthew 5:16 – *“Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven”***

**Ephesians 2:10 – *“For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them”***

Therefore, good works always *follow* salvation;

They do not precede it   
  
Conflicts between “Grace” and the “Law” can arise when someone …

1) Misunderstands the purpose of the Law

2) Redefines *grace* as something other than *“God’s benevolence on the undeserving”*

**Romans 1:16 – *“For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek”***

3) Tries to earn his own salvation or “supplement” Christ’s sacrifice

4) Follows the error of the Pharisees in tacking manmade rituals and traditions onto his doctrine

5) Fails to focus on the “whole counsel of God”

**Acts 20:27 – *“For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God”***

 **Hebrews 12:22-24 – *“But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, (1) the heavenly Jerusalem, and to (2) an innumerable company of angels,” (3) “To the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to (4) God the Judge of all, and to (5) the spirits of just men made perfect,” “And to (6) Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to (7) the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel”***

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