Truth for Today
The Bible Explained

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Freedom
Free from the Law

[Please note : New King James Version of the Scriptures used unless otherwise stated.]

Our talk today comes from the series of talks on freedom, which tells us of some of the wonderful blessings that the believer in the Lord Jesus has been brought into. Previous talks have described how we are free from sin, free from bondage, and free from fear. Today's talk will look at how we are set free from the Law.

We read in the book of Acts how many of the Jewish believers were still holding on to the things of the law; and in the churches in Galatia and Asia minor, which we know as Turkey today, there were many false teachers who came and preached a false gospel. They taught a mixed message of the work of Christ on the cross and their need to obey the Law of Moses as the only way to be saved. Acts 15 v. 1 says,

> And certain men came down from Judea and taught the brethren, Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved.

Later in that same chapter in verse 5 speaking about the gentile believers, the Pharisees said, "It is necessary to circumcise them, and to command them to keep the law of Moses." The apostle Paul in the book of Galatians, which we will consider later, tells us that we are free from the Law. You may have questions such as: What is the Law? and If I am free from the law can I do anything that I want?

What is the Law
If we go back to the very beginning of our Bibles we read in Genesis 2 vv. 16 -17:

> And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.

God intended that man should be free, but there was one condition, that of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, they were forbidden to eat the fruit of it. Adam and Eve failed and sin entered the world creating a distance between God and mankind. God made covenants with Adam, Noah, Abraham, and then with Moses in chapter 19 of Exodus. Here we find that God's chosen people, the children of Israel, had been enslaved in Egypt for many years, but then God intervened and redeemed them from their bondage. The people only had to have faith in the blood of the lamb that was shed and placed on the door post, and God brought them out of Egypt and through the Red Sea into freedom. He led them to Mount Sinai where they had made camp. God spoke to Moses in vv. 3-6:

> And Moses went up to God, and the LORD called to him from the mountain, saying, Thus you shall say to the house of Jacob, and tell the

> children of Israel: 'You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to Myself. Now therefore, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be a special treasure to Me above all people; for all the earth *is* Mine. And you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.' These are the words which you shall speak to the children of Israel.

After hearing what God had told Moses were the commandments that had to be followed, the people very quickly agreed whole heartedly and their response was, "All that the Lord has spoken we will do" (v. 8). Here the Lord was setting up a new covenant with Israel that they would be a special people representing God to all the people of the world. The key to this covenant is the small phrase, "if you will indeed obey my voice and keep My covenant." In this chapter the people are brought to the foot of Mount Sinai and are made aware of the holiness of God and then in the following chapters God sets out the terms of His commandments. In Exodus 24 v. 7 it says:

> Then he [Moses] took the Book of the Covenant and read in the hearing of the people. And they said, All that the LORD has said we will do, and be obedient.

What we might ask is the purpose of this covenant? The promise to Abraham was not superseded and the children of Israel had already been redeemed from bondage as a nation, so the Law was brought in as a rule of how they were to live as being set apart from this world, to live holy lives showing to a sinful world that God is holy.

We all know of the ten commandments, but as you read through Exodus, Leviticus (which means the Law), Numbers, and Deuteronomy, we find there are lots more Laws given on how to live. There are three categories of the Law. The moral laws which are found in the ten commandments: like do not steal, do not covet, do not take the Lord's name in vain, do not kill and so on. Then we have what we might call a civil law giving guidelines on how to live governmentally. The Israelites had been a people who had been slaves for so long that there was a need for them to have a law to uphold. Thirdly we find a ceremonial law, especially in the book of Leviticus where God lays down how they should worship. In all these laws, not just the ten commandments, 613 of them were to separate the children of Israel from the heathen nations who were worshipping idols and false gods, and it gave them their identity as God's people.

Sadly, just a few chapters on in Exodus we find in chapter 32 that after God had given the instructions for the tabernacle to Moses, the people become restless because Moses had been gone for some time. They turned to Aaron to ask him to build a golden calf. Aaron agrees and the people begin to worship this calf. They break the first two commandments within a short time - no other gods beside Me and no graven images. They failed to keep their promise to God that they would obey Him.

When we look at the old covenant, it is important that we fully understand what the law is intended to be. God has a purpose for the law, and we find the answer in Romans 3 v. 20:

> Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin.

What is the purpose of the Law? through the law comes the knowledge of sin. In all countries the governments establish rules and laws to give us standards of how we should live. The purpose of the law is not to free you, it is to condemn you. It doesn't tell you how great you are, it tells you how bad you are.

The Israelites over the years began to use the law to show how good they were. We read of two groups of people in the gospels who were very religious called the Sadducees and the Pharisees. They went to great lengths to boast and to demonstrate to others how they were so much better than most people because they kept some of the laws. There are many today who live their lives being obedient to rules thinking that this will get them to heaven. When we think of the term "religion" we think of having to follow a set of rules of do's and don'ts. This only tends to make people miserable because it doesn't free us, it binds us and leads us away from what God wants from us. He doesn't want your behaviour; He wants your heart.

We have read a little about those believers in Galatia who were being drawn back to live under the law, so it was important for the apostle Paul to make them aware, and to make us in the present day, that we are free from the Law. We can see how the Jewish people at the beginning of the church period were easily drawn towards those who were teaching another gospel. Years of following rituals and ceremonial activities made it easy for some of the early believers to follow after those false teachers and to want to keep parts of the law. Paul himself was a perfect example; before he was converted as he describes in Galatians 1 vv. 13-14:

> For you have heard of my former conduct in Judaism, how I persecuted the church of God beyond measure and tried to destroy it. And I advanced in Judaism beyond many of my contemporaries in my own nation, being more exceedingly zealous for the traditions of my fathers.

Paul reminds us that even the apostle Peter and Barnabas were drawn into this false teaching of legality. If we look around at so-called religion today, we see that mankind has brought many of these ceremonial traditions into our religious world. When people start to follow a religious system and find that it is empty and brings no satisfaction to the soul, then it can be hard to trust anything again. It can make us become very sceptical towards the true gospel. Religion can only bind you, but the Lord Jesus came to set the captive free.

The Lord Jesus while here on earth lived a sinless life keeping all the commandments, and He said in Matthew 5 vv. 17 -18:

> "Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfil. For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is finished."

What Jesus was saying is that there is nothing wrong with the law, it is a beautiful, holy thing, but it can never bring us salvation.

The Lord came to fulfil it but how has He done this? In the book of Colossians 2 vv. 13 -14 (quoting from the Macarthur study Bible) we read:

> And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God, made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses by cancelling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This He set aside, nailing it to the cross.

What the Bible is saying here is you have a certificate of debt, and where did that debt come from? From breaking God's law which is sin. What does Jesus do? Because He is sinless, He takes our sins and nails them to the cross, thus paying our debt.

Everyone who accepts the Lord Jesus as their Saviour should read the book of Romans. The apostle Paul sets out the foundations of the truths of Christianity and gives the believer the help

needed to live a life of faith in this present world. In chapter 7 Paul explains how we deal with this matter of the Law. The subject is first raised in chapter 6 v. 14:

> For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace.

We know that the Law came from God and there was a purpose for the Law to bring mankind to the knowledge of sin, but here it says we are no longer under law but under grace. The subject of the Law is returned to again in chapter 7. Reading from verses 1 to 12:

> Or do you not know, brethren (for I speak to those who know the law), that the law has dominion over a man as long as he lives? For the woman who has a husband is bound by the law to her husband as long as he lives. But if the husband dies, she is released from the law of her husband. So then if, while her husband lives, she marries another man, she will be called an adulteress; but if her husband dies, she is free from that law, so that she is no adulteress, though she has married another man. Therefore, my brethren, you also have become dead to the law through the body of Christ, that you may be married to another —to Him who was raised from the dead, that we should bear fruit to God. For when we were in the flesh, the sinful passions which were aroused by the law were at work in our members to bear fruit to death. But now we have been delivered from the law, having died to what we were held by, so that we should serve in the newness of the Spirit and not in the oldness of the letter. What shall we say then? Is the law sin? Certainly not! On the contrary, I would not have known sin except through the law. For I would not have known covetousness unless the law had said, “You shall not covet.” But sin, taking opportunity by the commandment, produced in me all manner of evil desire. For apart from the law sin was dead. I was alive once without the law, but when the commandment came, sin revived and I died. And the commandment, which was to bring life, I found to bring death. For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it killed me. Therefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy and just and good.

In verse 1, Paul tells us that the law has dominion over a man as long as he lives. The principle of the law not only includes the ten commandments and the law of Moses, but it also means that God has written His law over your conscience. We all know right from wrong, but we read that our conscience can be seared so we do wrong things. The law is also shown in creation, and God speaks to us through His creation as we see great and how powerful He is. Not only that but as we have heard earlier God spoke His law at Mount Sinai to the people of Israel. So, we see from verse 1 that the law has dominion over everyone as long as we live. How then can we break this dominion of the law? Paul gives us an example of the marriage bond and the only way to be free from it is if the partner dies. Death breaks the dominion of the law.

In verse 4 the believer takes the place of the wife and the law of the husband. Here in spiritual things, it is not the law that has died, but it is us who have died in our association with Christ. Paul has explained in chapter 6 how we have died spiritually with Jesus. This gives us a new direction for our lives in which we can say, “I believe in Him, I trust in him, I want to follow Him, I love Jesus.” Therefore God says that we are identified with Jesus in His death and in His resurrection. We have died to sin and as Christians we have a new relationship to sin. We are born again or born anew. There are some Christians who do not like to use the term “born again”, but Jesus said it and to live a fruitful life for Christ we need to realise that we are in a new relationship. So, we are not only dead to sin but in Romans 7 we have read that we are dead to the law.

We believe that we are saved by grace, but there are those who believe we have to live by the law if we want to obtain a more perfect life. But we are dead to the Law, and we have been set free from the Law.

Verse 4 also tells us that “we are married to another.” Our old relationship with the law ended and now we have a new relationship with Jesus Christ. We are set free from sin and the law, not that we live our lives as it pleases us, but that we are bound to Christ as we do what pleases Him. In our sinful state the law arouses the passions of sin within us, the more we are told not to do something then the more we go and do it, so we sin and the consequence of this is judgement and death.

Verse 5 brings out four things - the flesh (that is our fallen nature), law, sins, and death. It tells of our past life when we were still in our sins, but verse 6 starts with “but now”, which shows our present position being a newness of life. We have to understand that Paul is teaching us that through the death of the Lord Jesus on Calvary’s cross we have been set free to serve through the spirit, not by do’s and don’ts. To mature as a Christian is not by keeping the law but by having a relationship with Jesus that brings out a life of obedience and a willingness to serve Him.

There is an old saying that is often said when talking about the law that many believe came from John Bunyan who wrote pilgrim’s progress. “Run John run the Law demands, it gives us neither feet nor hands.” The law demands a certain life, but it cannot give us the necessary tools to live that life. It is only through the grace of God, the death of the Lord Jesus, and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit that we can live lives that are free from sin and the law

In the rest of chapter 7, Paul relates how the law in itself was perfect to a certain degree. It acted like a plumb line to show how much we had sinned, and it showed how far we were from being perfect, but in itself it couldn’t right the wrong. We read in the passage in the gospels of the rich young ruler who came to Jesus seeking eternal live. Jesus said to him: “No one is good except God, but if you keep the commandments.” The young man replied that he had kept them all since his youth, but when Jesus told him to sell his possessions and give to the poor, he went away sad. Mark’s gospel tell us that Jesus loved Him. Here was an upright man trying his best to gain eternal life, but it is impossible for any person to work his way to salvation. There are those today, who may knock on your door and try to give you a booklet, who maintain that you have to work for eternal life.

While the epistle to the Romans gives the doctrine of freedom from sin, the Galatian epistle gives us a more in-depth understanding of how we are free from the law. I would like to point out a few key verses today that may help you to learn more about the subject itself. In Galatians 1 vv. 3-4:

> Our Lord Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from this present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father.

Here the death of the Lord Jesus highlights that it was not just for sins, but that we might be delivered from this present evil world. We have already noticed from Romans and again in this book that the law, the flesh, and the world are mentioned together on many occasions. It is for freedom that Christ has set you free.

Our responsibility comes in verse 1 of chapter 5:

> Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage.

We have to stand firm. We are in a spiritual battle every day and the enemy will use any means to try to take away the joy and peace that we have as those who are liberated from all bondage. If we are to stand firm, we need a sure foundation which comes from knowing what the Bible teaches so that we are not drawn back into this yoke of bondage.

Paul points out a few things required for standing firm in chapter 5. Verse 7: “who hindered you from obeying the truth”; verse 9: “a little leaven leavens the whole lump” (leaven in Scripture is always a picture of sin). In verse 16 we are encouraged to “walk in the Spirit”; and in verse 25 we read: “If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.” A life of living and walking in the spirit is described in verses 22 and 23: “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law.” We are set free from the curse of the law through the death of Christ, and we have been brought into the family of God as sons and heirs.

In chapter 3 vv. 23 to 28 we read:

> But before faith came, we were kept under guard by the law, kept for the faith which would afterward be revealed. Therefore the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor. For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as were baptised into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

Paul tells us that before we were saved the law was like a tutor and its purpose was to bring us to Christ. In Greek and Roman families of that time the young children were looked after by someone who disciplined their children and educated them. When children reached adulthood, they no longer had need for the tutor, as they were treated as sons and daughters; and they were free from the discipline and fear of the tutor and were in a new relationship with their parents. So, it is with us spiritually we are no longer slaves to sin and the law, but we have become heirs of God through Christ.

A final thought on chapter 5 v. 13:

> For you, brethren, have been called to liberty; only do not use liberty as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another.

Let us never forget that God is holy and He wants us to be holy and to live righteously, not letting that which pleases the flesh and our sinful nature take control of our lives. We ought to be marked by love and the words of the apostle Paul in chapter 6 verses 14 and 15 which should be our motto for our lives.

> But God forbid that I should boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but a new creation.

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