



## Exodus (Part 21) – The Path of Life

Matt Chandler – March 4, 2017

---

[Video]

**Female:** From darkness to light, this is the story we all share as the people of God. The story of Israel is the story of us today. We are God's people. He draws us out to draw us in. And, like the Israelites, we still await the Promised Land in the midst of our sin and suffering, yet God is with us.

[End of video]

It's good to see you. If you have your Bibles, go ahead and grab those. We're going to be in Exodus 20. If you don't have a Bible, there should be a hardback black one somewhere around you. I would love for you to turn there, mainly because we're going to really look at this text multiple times in our time here together today.

My experience when it comes to the book of Exodus is that most people, specifically people with church backgrounds and maybe even those without a church background, are very familiar with the things that happen early in the book of Exodus. Maybe that's because of Charlton Heston's movie or other movies that Hollywood has made or (for those of us with church backgrounds) because of Sunday school stories around the book of Exodus.

A lot of people are aware of Moses as a baby being put in a basket and sent down the Nile. They are aware of the burning bush. They are aware of the plagues. They are aware of the parting of the Red Sea. Then they're aware of this text that we're going to be in together today, the giving of the Ten Commandments. Then it seems like after that moment, Hollywood and even those I know who have grown up in church seem to have no real recollection or understanding of what happens next.

It's as though collectively that's where our annual Bible-reading plan gives way. We muscled through, and now we get into the law, and it's like, "Don't boil a goat in milk," and we're like, "What

is that? I don't own any cattle. I don't own any baby goats." Well, some of you might out in Argyle or something, but we're like, "I don't know what this has to do with me." I've just found that.

As I've studied and gotten ready for this series, I felt like digging into these things. It's such a shame. It's unfortunate because the giving of the law and the building of the tabernacle are some of the most beautiful parts of Exodus, and I believe they are key in understanding who we are as the people of God and God's desires toward us. As we're starting to make the turn into, in a very real way, the unknown of Exodus, I'm excited at what the Lord might show us.

I said several weeks ago that when it comes to the law, there are multiple usages of the law but two primary uses. One is that it's like a spiritual MRI. It lets us know that we're sick. The second use of the law is it kind of lets us know the path of life. It lets us know how to walk in a way that is pleasing to God. What I want to do in our time today is emphasize that the law is the path to life. In the law is the fullness of life that God has brought to us in the person and work of Jesus Christ. With that said, let's read this, Exodus 20, starting in verse 1.

**"And God spoke all these words, saying, 'I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. You shall have no other gods before me. You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth.**

**You shall not bow down to them or serve them, for I the Lord your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and the fourth generation of those who hate me, but showing steadfast love to thousands of those who love me and keep my commandments. You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain, for the Lord will not hold him guiltless who takes his name in vain.**

**Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor, and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God. On it you shall not do any work, you, or your son, or your daughter, your male servant, or your female servant, or your livestock, or the sojourner who is within your gates. For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day. Therefore, the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.**

**Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long in the land that the Lord your God is giving you. You shall not murder. You shall not commit adultery. You shall not steal. You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor. You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or his male servant, or his female servant, or his ox, or his donkey, or anything that is your neighbor's.'**

**Now when all the people saw the thunder and the flashes of lightning and the sound of the trumpet and the mountain smoking, the people were afraid and trembled, and they stood far off and said to Moses, 'You speak to us, and we will listen; but do not let God speak to us, lest we die.' Moses said to the people, 'Do not fear, for God has come to test you, that the fear of him may be before you, that you may not sin.' The people stood far off, while Moses drew near to the thick darkness where God was."**

Now, it might help us. It might not help us. I think all analogies eventually break down. But it might help us, when it comes to the law, to look at the Ten Commandments, or in Hebrew, the Ten Words as the Constitution. If you're thinking in our legal system, it's best to think of the Ten Commandments as the Constitution of the US. The laws that follow the Ten Commandments are like various sections of federal law.

You have the Constitution that serves as a type of bedrock for our civilization here in the United States of America, and all of the laws that flow out of that come from the heart of the constitution, which is why, if laws get challenged and cases get challenged, it rolls up to the Supreme Court of the US to be weighed against the Constitution.

It's helpful to think of the Ten Commandments like the Constitution and the laws that follow as various federal laws given in a very specific time and specific place to a specific people. You'll hear more about those various sections of federal law in the next couple of weeks. For now, I want us to hone in on the Constitution.

Pharaoh has been seen throughout the book of Exodus as what is contrary to God. When you think about Pharaoh in Exodus, what you're seeing is all that is contrary to God. What we can see happening is in Pharaoh, you see Satan and demons. In Pharaoh, you see the base compulsion of humankind. Really, what you're seeing when it comes to Pharaoh's kingdom versus God's commandments is what the world values ultimately at its base compulsions versus God's good, right plan for humanity.

I told you at the beginning that we were going to concentrate on the law as the path to life. If you take Pharaoh's kingdom and begin to compare it to God's commandments, you begin to see very, very clearly that God is laying down the path to life and, on top of that, human flourishing in a way that if applied would certainly lead to an awareness that we can't live up to (we need a Savior) or, in general, life with a more rhythmic experience of mercy and grace.

Let me unpack this. This is Pharaoh's kingdom versus God's commandments. What I want you to think about as we walk through this is when we're talking about Pharaoh's kingdom, we're talking about our base compulsions as human beings. That means that left unchecked, we're going to line up with Pharaoh's kingdom and not God's commands.

I want you to see here when we compare and contrast these two. I think when we walk through this, you'll get a sense of why David says in Psalm 16:11, "You have made known to me the path of life. You fill me with joy in your presence." If we're thinking about Pharaoh's kingdom versus God's commandments, here's the first thing I think you'll see if you can remember back to what we covered early on in Exodus.

1. *The powerful have complete control over others.* If you were powerful, you controlled others, but in God's kingdom versus his commandment, you see that God's authority prevents people from claiming complete or absolute power. This is the first commandment. **"You shall have no other God's before me."**

You cannot be like Pharaoh, a God yourself, and hold such power that you can reign and rule over the hearts and lives of other men and women. That belongs to God and God alone. In God's commandments, it says, "There is no God but me." In Pharaoh's kingdom, our base compulsion, "I'm god, and I rule, and people do what I say." You might be passive-aggressive in that so it doesn't come out as bold as that, but this is in all of us.

2. *The gods are used to support the powerful.* If you remember back to Pharaoh's crown, it had a viper that faced out on it. That was symbolic of Pharaoh himself being a god and the gods serving Pharaoh and Pharaoh having power of the gods inside of him. Yet we see in God's commandments that an imageless God cannot be coopted and used for gain. This is the second and third commandment. Look there in verse 4.

**"You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. You shall not bow down to them or serve them, for I the Lord your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and the fourth generation of those who hate me, but showing steadfast love to thousands of those who love me and keep my commandments. You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain, for the Lord will not hold him guiltless who takes his name in vain."**

Historically, if you grew up in church, you probably heard that that has to do with bad language, using the Lord's name in a specific way. Really, the heart behind the commandment is that God will not be coopted, and you will not use the authority of the Lord to flex power and manipulate and coerce others. We see here the base compulsion of humankind, to make God serve them rather than to bow their knee before God.

*3. Production and compulsion are unrestrained, and vulnerable workers are exploited and overworked.* Yet, in God's commandment, you see that the Sabbath sets limits for production and consumption and rest for everyone, especially those who might be vulnerable to being overworked. This is the fourth commandment. Look there in verses 8-11.

**"Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor, and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God. On it you shall not do any work, you, or your son, or your daughter, your male servant, or your female servant, or your livestock, or the sojourner who is within your gates. For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day. Therefore, the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy."**

I want you to think about this. God knows the base compulsions of humanity. If he says, "Remember the Sabbath day and keep it holy," what will the elite do? "Don't worry. I'll do that. I'll absolutely do that. My slaves aren't going to do that. My servants aren't going to do this. This refugee is not going to do this." They would take advantage like Pharaoh and the Egyptians over the people of Israel. Bricks without straw, no days off, no worship of the Lord, no sacrifices to the Lord.

You just work and work and work and consume and consume and consume until the life is out of you. In God's economy, God's Commandments, he's going, "No, no, no. Everybody rests, even the

servant, even the refugee, even the sojourner. Even your cattle get the day off." What is this but a check on human consumption and production? Why? Because I think this is huge for our day.

I think we're so zealous to produce as a way to show we have value and worth rather than to rest in what God has said about us, that our value and worth is in our relationship with him and not in anything we can produce. This is a loud clanging bell going off for those in 2017 who feel like they can never produce enough, never get enough done, constantly feel exhausted. The Lord comes in and goes, "Rest. Everybody rest." He once again makes provision for the most vulnerable.

4. *Family life is subject to destruction.* We saw a full-on genocide there and families being broken apart. Yet we see in God's commandments in the fifth and seventh commandments respect for parental authority and marital integrity. Look there in verse 12. **"Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long in the land that the Lord your God is giving you."** Then look in verse 14. **"You shall not commit adultery."**

What's happening now? In Pharaoh's kingdom, the base compulsion of humankind, the work of the Enemy is that we would rebel against authority and have whatever our eyes desire. In God's kingdom, in God's economy, he's stepping in with his commandments and saying, "No, no, no. You shall respect authority. You shall honor authority. You are devoted to your spouse in care, in love, in kindness. You are devoted. There will be integrity in the marital relationship." Then we again see the Lord beginning to make provision for the weak and vulnerable.

5. *The weak are vulnerable to violence and genocide.* In God's kingdom, we see there is respect for all human life. Look there. That's commandment six in verse 13. **"You shall not murder."**

6. *The weak are vulnerable to economic exploitation.* In God's kingdom, we see that the weak are protected from the greed of the powerful. That is in commandments eight and ten. Look at verse 15. **"You shall not steal."** Then verse 17. **"You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or his male servant, or his female servant, or his ox, or his donkey, or anything that is your neighbor's."**

He is protecting the weak and vulnerable. In God's kingdom, the powerful become servants and not tormenters, but the base human compulsion of the powerful is to use that power to take advantage of the weak and vulnerable. We see this all over the world to this day. We see this in our very area just a few exits down. Just go drive through the St. Charles Apartments.

You see what happens when powerful men who have a lot of money and don't even live in the area begin to manipulate, begin to raise rent, begin to let an apartment complex almost fall in on its inhabitants. This is base human compulsion. The powerful overwhelm the weak, but it will not be so in the kingdom of God.

Even Jesus is going to point to this later in his ministry when it says that his authority will not be handled like the Gentiles handle their authority. If you want to be the greatest, you become the least. If you want to become the most powerful, you become the servant to all. We're not going to lord our authority over others like the Gentiles do.

7. *The weak have no effective legal protection.* In the kingdom of God, we see in commandment nine that there shall be integrity and impartiality in the judicial system. Listen to verse 16. **"You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor."** If you're familiar with the ministry of IJM, International Justice Mission, they flourish and feed on these last two.

They are all about the weak and vulnerable and reformation in and with the law because they understand that God's kingdom is greater than Pharaoh's kingdom, and they're giving themselves over to see God's rule and reign. We're going to get to Christ and the coming of Christ now. That's woven in through all of this in the world as we see it.

Now, there is something else I want you to see here as there is this compare-and-contrast thing that is going on. I think it gets so not talked about that I think it harms us. I want you to get a sense of how serious God is about these commandments. Look there in verses 18-21. **"Now when all the people saw the thunder and the flashes of lightning and the sound of the trumpet and the mountain smoking, the people were afraid and trembled, and they stood far off and said to Moses, 'You speak to us, and we will listen; but do not let God speak to us, lest we die.'**

**Moses said to the people, 'Do not fear, for God has come to test you...'"** That's a weird line. What's the test? **"...that the fear of him may be before you, that you may not sin.' The people stood far off, while Moses drew near to the thick darkness where God was."** I think we're so desperate to make God not terrifying that we knock all of the teeth out of the Lion of Judah. God is terrifying. There is a good kind of fear. Not all fear is good, but there is a good kind of fear.

Again, if you're a parent, you know this. I don't want to be a helicopter dad, but if my kids are playing next to a busy street, I need them to be afraid of that street. Not the kind of fear that is not rational and ultimately leads them into therapy. I just need them to know they can die out there. There needs to be good, healthy fear.

My daughter races horses. She's probably the most fearless Chandler that we have at this point. The littlest might catch up. I'm just constantly reminded. She has such a comfort level with this 1,000-pound animal that I'm constantly telling her, "Hey, be careful. Watch out for this." She's like, "Oh, he won't. She won't." I'm like, "Listen. Everybody says that until they get kicked in the face. Nobody is worried about it until it happens."

I'm not trying to make her terrified. In fact, she needs to be calm in order to ride well. At the same time, this is a giant, scary animal. You need to be careful. The Lord is tremendous and mighty. What can stay his hand? Nothing. What we see here is the mountain trembling and the people of God being afraid and God not trying to take that fear away but allowing that fear to remain that they may not sin.

We're going to get to it in a couple of months where they rebel against this God. They lose their fear of this God, and they begin to worship a golden image, which they have covenanted not to do. They had entered into covenant with God, and they're going to rebel, and there are going to be a lot of people killed for that act of treason against this God. I know you're eager for that weekend. You're probably already trying to figure out which one it is so you can avoid it, but it is coming. I need you to hear me. God is very, very, very serious about this law.

What we see later in the New Testament is there is this huge debate around the law once you get to the New Testament period. You have the Pharisees and the Sadducees, and they have these positions, and they're constantly arguing. There were eight major debates among the Pharisees and Sadducees, kind of the religious debates of their day.

They were constantly testing Jesus because they wanted Jesus to be on the other side or they wanted Jesus to be on their side, depending on where you are in the Gospels. Jesus is going to say this about the law, and it's a profound thing we need to dial into before we work our way through the rest of this.



In Matthew 22:34-40, the gospel of Matthew says, "**But when the Pharisees heard that he had silenced the Sadducees...**" Just here at this point, the Pharisees are going to be pretty excited about that. That's like the Republicans and the Democrats. That's what that is like. They're like, "Oh, Jesus smoked those Republicans!" There is some excitement around the fact that he has shut them up. Verse 35. "**And one of them, a lawyer, asked him a question to test him. 'Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?'**"

**And he said to him, 'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets.'**"

That is a huge statement. Why do we have the Old Testament if that's there? If all the Law, not just the Ten Commandments but all of the Law and all of the Prophets can be summed up on those two sentences, then what in the world is going on? Let me talk about that. How do the Law and the Prophets depend on these?

If we just look at the Ten Commandments for now... Again, we have much more to come in this series. The first four of the Ten Commandments hang on the command to love God since they describe ways to show covenant loyalty to God. Again, if you go back through the Ten Commandments... We won't do that again for time's sake, but if you look at the first four, all of those hang on that first commandment, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, mind, and soul."

The first four commandments are all about that vertical relationship with God. The last six commands are horizontal. They're meant to establish the relationship I have with others. The first four are, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, mind, and soul." The last six commandments are, "Love your neighbor as yourself."

All of the Law and all of the Prophets hang, depend, on those two commandments. I want to read this passage to you because I think the question is, "Do I still have to obey these? What are these things?" I want to read a passage to you, and we can talk about it, Galatians 3, starting in verse 21.

**"Is the law then contrary to the promises of God? Certainly not! For if a law had been given that could give life, then righteousness would indeed be by the law. But the Scripture**

**imprisoned everything under sin, so that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe.**

**Now before faith came, we were held captive under the law, imprisoned until the coming faith would be revealed. So then, the law was our guardian until Christ came, in order that we might be justified by faith. But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian, for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith."**

Now, this is where our question about how to view and see and understand the law starts to come in view. The apostle Paul writing to the churches in Galatia begins to say, "Here's what the law has done." In the giving of the law, the law immediately imprisoned all of us to sin. Do you know why? Because now we know we're sinners.

Keep in mind we're talking about the people of God being brought out of Egypt, a completely different moral system. They're pagans. There are 60-something gods that are worshipped. There are all sorts of perverse wickedness. There is genocide. There is death. There is murder. There is adultery. There is a breaking up... We've already compared Pharaoh's kingdom to the kingdom of God. Now, remember God is forming his people.

He has now given them the law, and the law has imprisoned them. Why? Because they're liars. Because they do commit adultery. Because as we will see, they will worship other gods that are not God. They will make graven images. They will covet. They will take advantage of. They will oppress, and they will not honor the Sabbath. They're imprisoned by sin. They're going to give it their best shot, and it's going to fall short.

This is what Paul means in Romans 3 when he says that all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. We can't. We're imprisoned by sin. We can't not sin. Listen. You know that about you. For 14 years, I've done this goofy Ten Commandments test. You have lied. You have coveted. You have looked at what other people have and thought you deserved it. You have had a really angry heart toward people. You have looked lustfully upon another man or woman who is not your spouse.

It probably usually looks different for men and women, but it happens all the time. Whether that be a romantic, "Oh, I wish my husband was more like that," or whether it be a man looking lustfully upon a woman, as Jesus would say later in the Sermon on the Mount. We've all done this. Don't look

over at your spouse right now and be like, "Really?" I'm not trying to start a marital conflict today. I'm just pointing out that we're all guilty of this.

Every last one of us is guilty of this. Paul is saying, "Hey, in the giving of the law, he imprisoned us to sin." It sounds awful, but it's actually really good news. That imprisonment to sin takes me now back to the MRI. Although we're talking about the path of life, I need you to hear me that that imprisonment now lets me know I'm a sinner in need of a Savior.

That's not all he said here in this text. Not only are we imprisoned by sin but we're held captive under the law. We're prisoners of the law. Here, the apostle Paul is speaking of the futility of just constantly trying to be good enough. It is an exhausting thing to be religious and not saved. There are few things as exhausting on earth as trying to earn the favor of God by finding all of these commands and giving yourself over, doing them in order to try to please him.

Paul says that we're held captive. Then he uses this language of a guardian, that we need a guardian. There are many ways to think about this. Really the way he's using this word is more of a financial guardian. You came into this great inheritance, but you weren't ready for that inheritance, so you were given a guardian until you were ready.

Let's just say you were a child, and your parent died and left you tens of millions of dollars, and they put an estate together to where you could not have access to that other than living expenses and things like that until you were at a certain age. Then you would get all the money. The Bible is saying the law is kind of like that.

If you have children, you know a little bit about how this works. When I was a kid, I couldn't just go to our refrigerator and grab a soda. If you're from Texas, I mean a Coke. I couldn't just go to the refrigerator, open it up, and grab a Coke. I had to ask permission. Do you know why? I was too dumb. I would just drink all of them, get hyped up on sugar and caffeine. Can you fathom an 8-year-old Matt Chandler hopped up on six Cokes? I would be... I don't even know. My mom would probably be in prison. In the end, I had to ask.

These are questions I had to ask. When I got a little bit older, a junior in high school, I couldn't go, "I'm going out." I had to go, "Hey, can I go out?" Then there were a series of questions. "Where are you going? Are their parents going to be there? Do their parents care what you do?" The last one

was never a question. "You will be home around 11:00." What is that? That's a guardian in place to protect me.

The law becomes something that protects us from the worst aspects of sin until, according to the text, Christ comes. What is it in the coming of Christ that begins to turn things? Well, the prophet Jeremiah prophesied that there was this day coming. When that day came, the law would cease to be that guardian, that external boundary maker. It instead would become an internal transformation.

There is a day coming according to Galatians and prophesied by the prophet Jeremiah. The coming of Christ was going to be the day when the law would cease to be an external, moral-shaping force. Now, it would be written on my heart so it would become an internal reality and not an external striving. Jeremiah 31:33 says, **"For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the Lord: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people."**

Keep in mind what has happened here. Moses is getting tablets of stone. He's going to come down with the Law written on tablets of stone, and Jeremiah says, "Hey, there is a day coming when the law isn't written on stone, but it's written on the hearts of flesh that God gives his people. In the coming of Christ and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, the law goes from external striving to internal reality."

In fact, later on in the book of Galatians, the apostle Paul would say in Galatians 5:22 (again, if you have a church background, you'll know this verse), **"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control..."** I love the last line. **"...against such things there is no law."**

What is that about? Here's what it's about. Again, if you're a parent... I'm sorry I'm always using that. If you're a parent, here's how you see that. What kind of external dictate can I have on patience with my children? "You will be patient. That's a rule in this house." That might modify behavior, but it certainly doesn't make them patient. Right? Can I say, "The rule in our house is that you have a heart full of joy"? I can make that rule, can't I? I have no idea how to enforce it.

Do you know what I would get if I tried to enforce it? A bunch of fake, "This is great." What happens when it's not great? See, if the law is not written on our hearts but is an external striving, then it

leads to veneer-like living. We talk about that all the time here. I just so desperately don't want you to walk in that, that kind of smile where the teeth are just a little too white.

The fruit of the Spirit, the law written on our hearts, the internal reality is love. See, the law was meant to accomplish this, but we needed to be aware of some things before it could be accomplished, namely that we can't obey the law. We're imprisoned to it, and we're trapped in our religiosity, not able to get there. You cannot experience love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, faithfulness, self-control if you're always trying to do it.

You have to rest in the finished work of Christ on your behalf. Then you get a sense of his love, and you are able to love. You get a sense of his patience, and you are able to be patient or at least grow in patience. As you become more aware of how God is these things for you and that spirit is living inside of you, you actually become more of these things yourself.

How do we end our time together? I have a couple of questions I want to ask. The first would be, "Do you feel imprisoned by sin?" If you think back to what we read in Galatians, Galatians is saying that what happens when you're living in Pharaoh's kingdom versus God's kingdom is you're imprisoned to sin. As you try to maneuver your way through God's commandments on your terms and pick and choose what you want, you're actually living contrary to the Spirit of Christ. I'm asking you, "Are you imprisoned to sin?"

The second question I wanted to ask is, "Are you being held captive under the law?" I think there are two great burdens that are haunting realities for me. The first is that many of you are really, truly imprisoned to sin. You're not Christians. You're far from God. You very much are going to line up with the way Pharaoh decreed life would work in his kingdom versus the way God is trying to reveal to you that you need a Savior, and you are stuck, imprisoned.

Part of what I want to do is invite you into the rest of having the law written on your heart. You can be free from the imprisonment of sin and death. You just can. Listen. I've been here a long time. I know there are a thousand reasons why you think you're the one who can't be. Even now, you're probably self-justifying. "Well, if that man knew *this* about me or if he knew *this* about me or if he had any idea of what has gone on in my past..."

I just want to very respectfully let you know that I don't need to know anything about you to know that this is true for you. I carry that burden. I know you're wrestling with doubt. I know there is

animosity. I know things have happened. Bad things have happened, and it makes you really angry with God if there is even a God. I just want to lay before you the opportunity of escape from the imprisonment to sin and death.

That's a burden that is nearly always on me. It's even in how I prep sermons. I always want to get to this moment where I can make this appeal to you. There is room for you at the cross of Jesus Christ. There is no sin with more power than the cross of Jesus Christ. The second burden I carry... I think I'll carry this as long as I'm here because of where we contextually land. I'm wondering if there are those of you in here who are held captive under the law.

Maybe I can paint a picture of that. You grew up in church. You have a long religious background. Somewhere along the way, you begin to pick some things up about what you're supposed to do and not do. This happens very naturally. Most of the time, it's not even preached. It's just picked up on. At The Village Church, there are certain phrases we use. There are certain things you'll see. You'll see people raise their hands. You'll see people maybe clap while we sing. You'll see that we do Home Groups. We really do have a vernacular, a language we use here.

It's not uncommon for people to say around here, "It's okay to not be okay. Just don't stay there." These are phrases we use. What happens is you come into a religious atmosphere, and you begin to put on the clothes of religiosity. You know, "During this song, I'm supposed to raise my hand at this moment. At this church, during the song, I maybe need to tap my chest and go, 'Gosh, that's good.' I need to say things like, 'It's okay to not be okay.' I need to talk about *this* or say *this* or act like *this* or rejoice in *this* or not rejoice in *this*. I need to be critical of *that* and not critical of *that*."

This is what happens. None of that is the beauty of Christ written on your heart. It's external religious action. You will not find love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, faithfulness, and self-control in that space. What I think you will find...look right at me...is exhaustion. If you're here and you've been baptized and you have a lot of boxes checked... This happened maybe early on in your life, so you've read *My Utmost for his Highest*, and you took a stab at learning the acoustic guitar.

You could just go down the list. You've done all of that, yet it still just feels dry and dusty, you feel like you can never measure up, and you feel this constant weight of the impossibility of measuring up and being good enough for God. I want you to hear me again say that in the coming of Jesus

Christ, who has fulfilled the law so you would not have to fulfill the law, indwells in your heart via the Holy Spirit so you are not held captive by the law any longer at all.

Rather, you are held steadfast in grace. This doesn't mean we don't strive and toil and push and fight for holiness. We do, but it means we do it very differently. Here's what I mean by that. Of all of the religious activity I get myself involved in, none of it is so I might please the Lord. All of it is because he is pleased with me.

I don't take my wife out on a date in order that I might love her. I don't spend time with her because I don't really like her, so maybe if I spend a little time with her... That's not how this works. I want to have conversation with her. I want to be alone with her because I love her and because I know she loves me. In a very real sense, the singular duty of the Christian is to abide and pursue a relationship with God, to center ourselves in his presence and his power and let that transform us.

If I could give you an assignment this week, it would be just to read John 15. The triune God of the universe is doing all of this activity in the vineyard. What is the branch's job? Just to abide, just to be there with God. In being there with God, we're transformed and shaped and molded and pruned so more fruit might grow. The law written on our hearts is the good fight of abiding in the presence of God. I really just believe that that is where freedom is found, and that is where transformation begins.

Again, I'll ask my two questions. Do you feel imprisoned to sin? Do you feel held captive by the law? I'm inviting you. God is inviting you both into the rest that comes from surrender to Jesus. I end simply with this. Don't forget that God is really, really, really, serious about these things. Grace has made the way. Let's pray.

Father, I thank you for these truths. I thank you that you have made known to us the path of life. I thank you for how good the news of this constitution that you have written for your people is. When compared to base human compulsion, your way is better. Help us understand that. I do pray, Father, that we would understand that all the Law and Prophets depend on this vertical pursuit of you and this horizontal love of others.

Thank you that you write the law on our hearts and that we no longer need to be imprisoned by sin or held captive under the law, nor do we, like children, need a guardian. Now Christ has come, and the law has been written on our hearts. Let us grow in the fruit of the Spirit as we're aware that we

have all we need in you, that all the promises of God find their yes in you. It's for your beautiful name I pray, amen.

© 2017 The Village Church