

The Law and Adam

Genesis 1:26-2:17 WCF 19:1 Text: Genesis 2:16&17

What is freedom? Well it can't be freedom to do whatever we please. That definition of freedom could result in casting off protective restraints which is potentially harmful, like driving without a seatbelt. You might feel freer without one but if someone makes a mistake and there is a crash then such freedom could be deadly. Similarly if you had a goldfish and freed that goldfish from its aquarium it would soon die. So true freedom must have limits and boundaries.

What are they.?

In our communities we have governments who set all kinds of boundaries, the vast majority which are good. Council regulations, traffic signs, laws of various kinds all promote freedom within safe boundaries. But not in every case. For example some of the legislation in NZ permits murder of the unborn, gambling and perversity in relationships, none of which represent true freedom. Why?

Because as our text reveals, true freedom is to be found within the bounds of God's law and then in God's grace. Let's begin with Adam and the law.

When God created man and placed him in the garden He gave Adam a great deal of freedom. He made Adam and the woman in his own image above all the other creatures, He made them an intelligent rational creatures who shared in the communicable attributes of God such as love, wisdom, power, knowledge, justice, mercy and so on. God also gave Adam and Eve the freedom of perfect companionship with each other and the ability to procreate, that is fill the earth and to subdue it or have dominion over it; to care for the garden and cultivating it.

Furthermore as chapter 2:15 puts it Adam had the freedom to eat from every tree in the garden except one. Verse 16 says you may freely eat. Literally in the Hebrew "eat and eat!" In other words Adam had a free run of the place. It was his to use and enjoy without any constraints except one. His freedom also extended to the liberty of talking with God in the garden. In chapter 1:29 God addresses man saying, "I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the surface of the earth and every tree bearing seed fruit yielding seed as fruit for you". And in chapter 3:10-12 Adam and Eve had the freedom to address God. They could also walk with God. In chapter 3:8 God walked in the cool of the garden looking for Adam and Eve.

They had freedom in movement, freedom of choice and freedom in man's relationship with God to walk and talk with God. All that freedom was theirs providing they recognised that God (Not Adam was supreme).

We do notice in the narrative that MAN is not in the centre. GOD placed the tree of life in the centre of the garden. According to Genesis 3:22 the fruit of the tree of life,... if eaten regularly,... would enable man to live for ever. It's also worth noting that this same tree grows in profusion in the New Heavens and the New Earth according to Revelation 22:2; "for the health of the nations" it says. We may well eat from that tree when we get there! But then, (getting back to the Garden of Eden) there was also the tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil which God placed in the garden. This tree was the prohibition or the boundary. If Adam stayed on the right side of the boundary he would remain completely free.

God said “from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil YOU SHALL NOT EAT for in the day that you eat from it you shall surely die!”. The Westminster Confession of Faith calls this original promise and demand ‘abstain and live eat and die’ the Covenant of Works. It’s also known by some as the Covenant of Creation.

There are several aspects to the Covenant of Works. One is the Sabbath. It says in Genesis 2:3 that God blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy. Since the Lord had Moses record that in the Pentateuch, the Sabbath was to have great significance in the world. All of humanity are to follow the Creators example by working six days and resting on the seventh, in our case, since the resurrection of Christ, on the first day of the week.

A second creation ordinance we find in these first two chapters of Genesis is marriage. In the verse which follows the text the Lord said is it not good for man to be alone so God created a helper who corresponded appropriately to man. This ordinance also has far reaching implications. For example there is a *oneness* in the relationship seen in the words the two shall become one flesh. Verse 24 says the man shall cleave to his wife. Jesus reaffirmed this by saying “a man shall leave his father and mother and shall be joined to his wife and the two shall be one flesh.” The two-fold *purpose* of the marriage ordinance is also found in Genesis 1 & 2. They include fruitfulness or procreation and secondly companionship. God gave the woman to Adam to be his life-long companion and helper.

So from the time of Creation onwards Adam and the woman or a man and his wife are correspond to one another in a unique way. Therefore any other attempted correspondence to replace God’s design is nothing but a perversion and distortion of God’s design of marriage as a creation ordinance. God’s answer to any perversion of the marriage relationship is “you will surely die.

A third creation ordinance found in these two chapters of Genesis is that of labour. God worked 6 days before He rested on the seventh. Just as a lot of society’s ills result from a failure to observe the day of rest so too do many of society’s ills result from a failure to work 6 days. The treasurer Bill English’s comments were to the point when he lamented the fact that farm workers are often hard to get for the simple reason that some, too many, who can work don’t want to work. Six days work out of seven is the creation mandate which is why the Apostle Paul said, “steal no longer but work with your hands so that you may have something to share with others in need.” (Ephesians 4: 28)

However the primary focus of the creation ordinance is found in Genesis 2:17 and the requirement not to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. It tells us that Adam’s marriage, the pattern of 6 days’ work one day rest, and Adam’s life as a covenant creature must be viewed as a whole. Obedience brings life,... disobedience results in death and God used the tree as the focal point of his covenant relationship with Adam and Eve to emphasise that point.

If Adam succeeded in obeying God on this point then God’s blessing under all the other provisions of the creation covenant were guaranteed. Adam and the woman were given every provision, everything which was good except this one thing; the tree of good and evil. It was put there so that Adam could demonstrate his voluntary and willing love for God,...or otherwise. Furthermore since the tree looked pleasing and the fruit good to eat, all Adam and the woman had go by, or to indicate the *unusualness* of this tree was the Word of God!

Would they accept and obey God's word?! Well it wasn't such a big ask since sin had not yet at that point entered their hearts so they did have the ability to keep God's word.

Again, this tells us that WE are NOT at the centre. Many in today's increasingly secular world think otherwise. Many have this feeling that survival of the human race depends entirely on us. That we are the ones who have to control the climate and write the legislation for humanities survival and well-being.

But Genesis 2:17 says other-wise. GOD IS at the centre. He sets the rules and the first law given to Adam is this; obedience bring blessing and life,... while disobedience brings cursing and death.

Does that covenant and that law still apply today? Yes, but not for everyone and I'll explain why later. However for those under the Covenant of Works as soon as anyone breaches the boundaries God has set and trespasses into areas which God has said "do not go" then the word that comes to us is "in that day you shall surely die."

In the beginning it was just this one rule but since the days of Moses and the formation of a nation Israel now it is the entire moral law of God which reaches into every area of life, including our relationships with God, and other people, how we regard our neighbour and or and their possessions, our business life and home life and so on.

In these areas of life true freedom can't be found in human autonomy or in doing as we please or in anything beyond the limits set by God.

Do we always live in freedom? No! Whenever we break any of God's laws our true freedom is curtailed and if that sin isn't arrested by repentance we become slaves to sin and we all know a slave is not free. Romans 6:23 also tells us that that the wages of sin is death.

Thankfully that isn't the last word! As we read on in Genesis we discover how sin entered the world. Adam and Eve broke the Covenant of Works by eating from the tree of good and evil. Genesis 3 tells us Adam and Eve, tempted by the serpent, failed the test and heard the judgment of God. "From dust you came and to dust you shall return". Death had entered the world as God had warned it would. And they were denied access to the garden and the tree of life.

However along with the word of judgement was a word of promise and hope. These words of promise and hope tells us why not everyone remains under the Covenant of Works. The seed of the woman would bruise the serpents head. Adam and Eve would have offspring and Adam's wife would be called Eve, the mother of all mankind. It seemed that man had lost his freedom for ever and was destined for a life of enslavement to sin until he died and returned to the dust! As we read on in Genesis we see the further effects of breaking the covenant. In Genesis 6 we read that man's sin was so great that it grieved God and that he regretted making man .

But we see in Genesis 3 another side to God that is altogether wonderful, soul restoring and delightful. Word's are inadequate to describe it. We see Grace. God said to the serpent who tempted Adam and Eve "I will put enmity between you and the woman and between your seed and hers seed he shall bruise you head and you shall bruise his heel.

This promise, (as we discover in the rest of God's revelation which we may call the Covenant of Grace), points to the mediator of the Covenant of Grace, the Messiah who is Jesus Christ.

So Adam and the woman were driven out of the Garden of Eden but not as they might have feared, that is, live the rest of their lives in misery and then die. The woman was given the name Eve. She would be the mother of all mankind and from that point on (as the commentator Van der Waal puts it), "The splendour of the mother promise beamed down on mankind which had fallen deeply into sin." From then on God would work out his purpose for Adam and Eve and for the godly seed within the human race UNDER THE COVENANT OF GRACE. Does that annul the Covenant of Works? No!

There are according to Genesis two lines of humanity. One is governed by God and the other is governed by Satan. Lives governed by Satan are described in Romans as slaves to sin! They may think they can earn their way to heaven. But that is impossible. All our righteous acts are like filthy rags according to the prophet Isaiah. We can only come to the Father through the Son. Those who are governed by God within his Covenant of Grace receive a new freedom. This freedom is a freedom from sin and shame and slavery to sin. It's a freedom won for us by Jesus Christ who is the fulfilment of that first promise. He is the One who bruised the serpents head. He cancelled the power of sin over us and sealed Satan's doom by rising from the dead.

All who believe and trust in Jesus enjoy that freedom! Jesus himself said "If the Son sets you free you are free indeed!"

Furthermore through faith in Christ we have a new ability to live within the bounds that God has set for us and enjoy the freedom of living within the law of God, only no longer under the Covenant of Works. Christ has fulfilled all it's obligations for us through his perfect obedience and his sacrifice for sin. We now enjoy living in the freedom of obedience under the Covenant of Grace.

May our lives under the Covenant of Grace be lives of thankfulness to Christ who purchased our freedom for us on the cross.

Amen