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The Uses of God's Moral Law

1 TIMOTHY 1:8

Introduction

1. All of us have within us a sense of right and wrong, a sense that we should or should not do something.
2. From our youth, we were quick to say that something was or was not right or fair.
3. Where does this sense of fairness come from, this belief that something is right or wrong.
4. I believe that it comes from the God of Creation.

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5. Last week we began looking at the three kinds of laws which God set forth at Mount Sinai:
 - a. Ceremonial law — regulations for worshiping God in His sanctuary.
 - b. Civil law — governed Israel as a nation under God (included Included guidelines for waging war, restrictions on land use, regulations for debt, and penalties for specific violations of Israel's legal code).
 - c. Moral law —the righteous and eternal standard for our relationship with God and others.
6. We saw how, with the coming of Christ,
 - a. The ceremonial law was fulfilled in His sacrifice on the cross and the building of His church.
 - b. The civil law was designed to guide Israel as a theocracy, but did not apply to the church because the church is a kingdom not of this world (John 18:36).

7. The moral law, however, goes back to the first man and woman and dictated how they were to respond to God and to each other.
8. Tonight, I would like for us to look more closely at the purposes of God's moral law.

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9. In the apostle Paul's first letter to the evangelist Timothy, he wrote, "But we know that the Law is good, if one uses it lawfully" (1 Timothy 1:8).
10. So, the question is, "How do we use the Law?"
11. In our study, I believe we will find that God's law . . .
 - a. Teaches God's redeemed people how to live for His glory.
 - b. Restrains sin in society.
 - c. Shows sinners their need for a Savior.

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I. Teaches Us How To Live

A. GOD DELIVERED ISRAEL FROM EGYPT BEFORE GIVING THEM THE LAW

1. In Exodus 20:2, before God gave His people, Israel, the Ten Commandments, He said, "I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery."
2. In this verse, God summarized in two phrases what He had done for Israel:
 - a. "I . . . brought you out of the land of Egypt"
 - b. "I brought you . . . out of the house of slavery"
3. God delivered His people by means of ten devastating plagues and the waters of the Red Sea.
4. He provided them with meat in the evening and manna in the morning (Exodus 16:8,12).

5. It was only after their liberation that God gave Israel His Law.
6. The first 19 chapters of Exodus detail Israel's salvation by grace — God fulfilled His covenant promise to Abraham (Genesis 15:13-14) by bringing Israel out of Egypt.
7. It is in chapter 20 that God gives His people a law by which to live.
8. It was a law for those whom He had already redeemed.
9. If we were to sum up the message of Exodus, it would be that "God's people are saved for God's glory."
10. God released His people from their bondage to Pharaoh in order that they might serve Him, the true and living God.
11. He did not set His people free so that they could do whatever they wanted, but that they could live for Him.
12. Through His servant Moses, God kept saying to Pharaoh, "Let my people go, that they may serve Me" (Exodus 7:16).
13. Thus, one of the most important uses of the Law is to teach those who have been redeemed how to live for God's glory.

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14. When Moses spoke to the Israelites in the plains of Moab, almost 40 years after they had left Egypt, he gave them these instructions:

"When your son asks you in time to come, saying, 'What do the testimonies and the statutes and the judgments mean which the Lord our God commanded you?' then you shall say to your son, 'We were slaves to Pharaoh in Egypt, and the Lord brought us from Egypt with a mighty hand. 'Moreover, the Lord showed great and distressing signs and wonders before our eyes against Egypt, Pharaoh and all his household; **Slide 6** He brought us out from there in order to bring us in, to give us the land which He had sworn to our fathers.' "So the Lord commanded us to observe all these statutes, to fear the Lord our God for our good always and for our survival, as it is today."

(Deuteronomy 6:20–24, NASB95)

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B. GOD REDEEMED US IN CHRIST BEFORE GIVING US HIS LAW

1. This relationship between law and grace in the exodus is something we see in the New Testament for us as Christians.
2. We, too, were slaves to sin.
3. We lived in spiritual bondage to Satan with no means of escape — we had been “held captive by him to do his will” (2 Timothy 2:26).
4. **But God set us free** (Ephesians 2:4-6; Romans 6:6-7).

“But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus,”
(Ephesians 2:4–6, NASB95)

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“. . . our old self was crucified with Him, in order that our body of sin might be done away with, so that we would no longer be slaves to sin; for he who has died is free from sin” (Romans 6:6-7, NASB95)

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5. **Now God calls us to live as those who have been set free from sin.**

“Act as free men, and do not use your freedom as a covering for evil, but use it as bondslaves of God. Honor all people, love the brotherhood, fear God, honor the king.” (1 Peter 2:16-17, NASB95)

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“For you were called to freedom, brethren; only do not turn your freedom into an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one

another. For the whole Law is fulfilled in one word, in the statement, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." (Galatians 5:13-14, NASB95)

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6. Peter and Paul were simply repeating what Jesus had said when He summarized the Law in two great commandments:

“. . . you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength." (Mark 12:30, NASB95)

"You shall love your neighbor as yourself." (Mark 12:31, NASB95)

7. Remember, Jesus told His disciples, "If you love Me, you will keep My commandments" (John 14:15).
8. The law then is useful in showing us what is pleasing to God. It shows us how to live.

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II. Restrains Sin In Society

A. ISRAEL OF OLD

1. With their accusation of guilt and threat of punishment, God's moral law served to discourage His people from sinning against Him.
2. While the law cannot remove our sinful desires, it can to some extent restrain our sin.
3. When the Israelites encamped around Mt. Sinai saw the lightning flashes and the dark cloud upon the mountain and when they heard the thunder and what sounded like a very loud trumpet, they trembled (Exodus 19:13).
4. His very presence on the mountain terrified them.
5. Moses said to them, "Do not be afraid; for God has come in order to test you, and in order that the fear of Him may remain with you, so that you may

not sin" (Exodus 20:20).

6. Not only did the law encourage their fear of God, it also discouraged any desire to sin against Him.
7. They knew there was a great and powerful God who would punish them for their sins.

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B. IT SERVES AS AN OBJECTIVE STANDARD OF RIGHT AND WRONG

1. God's moral law issues from a God of truth and justice.
2. Having it constantly before us declares that we are accountable to God for what we do, and for what we fail to do.
3. God's moral law serves to inform our conscience so that we have a greater sense of what God requires and what He forbids.
4. If we go back and look further at what Paul said in his letter to Timothy we find this, "But we know that the Law is good, if one uses it lawfully, realizing the fact that **law is not made for a righteous person**, but for those who are lawless and rebellious, for the ungodly and sinners, for the unholy and profane, for those who kill their fathers or mothers, for murderers and immoral men and homosexuals and kidnappers and liars and perjurers, and whatever else is contrary to sound teaching, according to the glorious gospel of the blessed God, with which I have been entrusted." (1 Timothy 1:8-11, NASB95)
5. The fact that "law is not made for a righteous person" confirms what Paul said in his Galatian letter:

"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law." (Galatians 5:22-23, NASB95)

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III. Reveals Our Need For A Savior

A. THE LAW SHOWS US HOW SINFUL WE ARE.

1. In Exodus 24:7, after Moses read the law to the people, they said, "All that the Lord has spoken we will do, and we will be obedient!"
2. They promised to keep the whole law of God.
3. Almost 40 years later, Moses told them, "He [God] declared to you His covenant which He commanded you to perform, that is, the Ten Commandments; and He wrote them on two tablets of stone" (Deuteronomy 4:13).
4. The Israelites were bound to keep God's law because their salvation required perfect obedience to the law of God.

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5. In Deuteronomy 6:24-25, we find Moses reminding the Israelites, "So the Lord commanded us to observe all these statutes, to fear the Lord our God for our good always and for our survival, as it is today. "It will be righteousness for us if we are careful to observe all this commandment before the Lord our God, just as He commanded us." (Deuteronomy 6:24-25, NASB95)
6. In Leviticus 18:5, God had said to them, "So you shall keep My statutes and My judgments, by which a man may live if he does them; I am the Lord." (Leviticus 18:5, NASB95)
7. To be righteous before God, the Israelites had to keep the law.
8. The problem was, they couldn't keep the law.
9. No sooner had God stipulated that they were not to have any gods before Him or create a graven image than they made a golden calf (Exodus 32).
10. Here is the point: The God's moral law is useful for teaching us how we are to live, but it is powerless against our sinful nature.

11. The law shows us just how sinful we are.

Slide 16**B. THE LAW HAS A TENDENCY TO PROVOKE OUR SIN**

1. Have you ever told one of your children not to do something only to find they went and did it anyway.
2. It is like the child, who, when his mother asked him why he had done something she told him not to do, he said, "I can't help myself."
3. Paul makes this point in Romans 7:7b.

"I would not have come to know sin except through the Law; for I would not have known about coveting if the Law had not said, "You shall not covet."" (Romans 7:7b, NASB95)

4. In verse 8, he adds: "But sin, taking opportunity through the commandment, produced in me coveting of every kind" (Romans 7:8a, NASB95)

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5. He then continues:

"for apart from the Law sin is dead. I was once alive apart from the Law; but when the commandment came, sin became alive and I died; and this commandment, which was to result in life, proved to result in death for me; for sin, taking an opportunity through the commandment, deceived me and through it killed me." (Romans 7:8b–11, NASB95)

6. To take it one step further, the law teaches that all who sin die and are under God's curse (Galatians 3:10b).

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"Cursed is everyone who does not abide by all things written in the book of the law, to perform them." (Galatians 3:10b, NASB95)

7. When we put all of this together, here is what we have — God's people were bound to keep a law which they could not obey.

8. Why would God give them such a law?
 - a. To point them to a the need for a Savior.
 - b. Only someone who could perfectly keep the law and thereby become the necessary sacrifice for their sins.

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9. Here is the way Paul explained it (Romans 5:20-21).

“The Law came in so that the transgression would increase; but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more, so that, as sin reigned in death, even so grace would reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.” (Romans 5:20–21, NASB95)

Conclusion

1. As one preacher put it, the law is . . .
 - a. A map which guides our conduct.
 - b. A muzzle to keep us from doing wrong.
 - c. A mirror to show us our sin.
2. Ultimately, it brings us to the only One who can save us from the curse under which we find ourselves because of our violations.
3. That person is Jesus, the Christ, the perfect “Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world” (John 1:29).
4. Do you need Him to save you?
 - a. He is the only way to God.
 - b. He is the essence of truth.
 - c. In Him alone we find abundant, eternal life.