

Freedom from Vows, Oaths, and Curses

- I. INTRO → I could tell you stories... but I want to know what the Bible says...
 - A. Since the Enlightenment (17th–18th century), Western culture has increasingly embraced a skeptical view of the spiritual realm.
 - 1. Modern thought tends to assume the absence of anything spiritual
 - 2. Everything must be explainable, measurable, and observable
 - B. But this is a new assumption.
 - 1. For most of human history, people across cultures assumed the opposite
 - 2. In biblical times, vows, oaths, blessings, and curses were understood to have real, lasting spiritual consequences
 - 3. People often thought that illness, misfortune, or disaster could often be traced to unseen spiritual causes, not just natural ones.
 - C. Today, in much of the global South and East, this is still the norm
 - 1. Vows, ancestral pacts, generational curses, and deliverance from spiritual oppression are taken seriously and addressed through spiritual means.
 - D. The Bible fully affirms this. Scripture assumes that:
 - 1. Vows and oaths bind people spiritually
 - 2. Curses have an effect unless broken
 - 3. Spiritual beings influence earthly affairs and afflict people
 - 4. Words—blessings or curses—have power
 - E. Why This Matters → Words Matter!
 - 1. People make contracts, agreements, and life-altering decisions—and most of these are built on words. They get married, they swear under oath, they make promises. Words matter in the Bible too.
 - a) In Genesis, God speaks over the chaos.
 - b) Paul instructs Titus that the word brings order to the church.
 - c) Jesus Himself is called the Word.
 - 2. Whether written or spoken, words shape reality.
 - F. Now, let's be clear—this doesn't mean we buy into mystical superstition. Some say, "Don't say that! You'll speak it into existence!" But that's not biblical—that's closer to Eastern mysticism. Still, Scripture says: the tongue has the power of life and death (Proverbs 18:21).
 - 1. You can curse someone with your words.
 - 2. You can tear them down.
 - 3. You can shape their identity and destiny.
 - a) We see it all the time:
 - (1) A child who's told they're "stupid" or "worthless" begins to believe it. Words leave a mark.
 - G. So the question isn't "Do words have power?" // The question is: "What kind of power?"
 - 1. Many people, even sincere Christians, may live under the lingering influence of unrepentant vows, rash oaths, or inherited spiritual affliction

- a) Give examples... marriage/divorce, lying under oath, rash vows “I will never...”, freemasonry, blood-brothers
- 2. Freedom in Christ, being secured in the gospel, includes recognizing and renouncing the unseen ties and lies that keep us bound, and replacing them with TRUTH so that we may walk in the light of Christ
- 3. Jesus breaks the chains, but we need to walk in FREEDOM!

II. The Biblical and Theological Background of Vows

- A. Vow – A personal promise made to God.
- B. Oath – A solemn promise before God to affirm or bind a statement or action.
- C. Curse – The consequence, divine or demonic, of violating a vow, oath, or covenant. <or> a pronouncement of evil upon a person
- D. What do we need to know about VOWS/OATHS?
 - 1. **Voluntary but binding** – *Deuteronomy 23:21–23, [21] “If you make a vow to the LORD your God, you shall not delay fulfilling it, for the LORD your God will surely require it of you, and you will be guilty of sin. [22] But if you refrain from vowing, you will not be guilty of sin. [23] You shall be careful to do what has passed your lips, for you have voluntarily vowed to the LORD your God what you have promised with your mouth. (ESV)*
 - a) Vows are not required but, once made, must be kept.
 - b) God holds people accountable for their words.
 - 2. **Sometimes they were connected to Worship** (not always bad)
 - a) Ex: Nazarite Vow in Numbers 6:1-21
 - b) Vows often reflect devotion or desperation (ex: Hannah)
 - 3. **Breaking a vow is sinful and dangerous**
 - a) *Ecclesiastes 5:4–6 [4] When you vow a vow to God, do not delay paying it, for he has no pleasure in fools. Pay what you vow. [5] It is better that you should not vow than that you should vow and not pay. [6] Let not your mouth lead you into sin, and do not say before the messenger that it was a mistake. Why should God be angry at your voice and destroy the work of your hands?*
 - (1) Wow - destroy the work of my hands?
 - b) *Numbers 30:2 [2] If a man vows a vow to the LORD, or swears an oath to bind himself by a pledge, he shall not break his word. He shall do according to all that proceeds out of his mouth. (ESV)*
 - (1) Even “thoughtless utterance” (v6)
 - 4. **Vows can be declared VOID**
 - a) *Numbers 30:12 [12] But if her husband makes them null and void on the day that he hears them, then whatever proceeds out of her lips concerning her vows or concerning her pledge of herself shall not stand. Her husband has made them void, and the LORD will forgive her.*
 - b) Now this is a crucial point b/c Jesus, as the husband of the bride of Christ, can declare our vows VOID.

(1) He became a curse, therefore breaking the curse of the Law, so we might not be accursed.

(2) More to this later, I just don't want you to walk in fear

- c) This does not mean all vows are automatically voided, but it DOES mean that in repentance and faith, a believer can be freed from unholy vows because of Christ's authority and atonement.

E. Why do people make vows if they are so serious

1. Vows can be made in faith (Nazarite), but also in fear, pride, or manipulation. They want to be part of a community!
2. Jesus warns against unnecessary vows, implying that true disciples should speak with integrity; no vow needed
3. *Matthew 5:33–37 [33] “Again you have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not swear falsely, but shall perform to the Lord what you have sworn.’ [34] But I say to you, Do not take an oath at all, either by heaven, for it is the throne of God, [35] or by the earth, for it is his footstool, or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King. [36] And do not take an oath by your head, for you cannot make one hair white or black. [37] Let what you say be simply ‘Yes’ or ‘No’; anything more than this comes from evil. (c.f. James 5:16)*

F. The point is that there is spiritual power in words.

1. *Proverbs 18:21 – “Death and life are in the power of the tongue.”*
2. Think about it: with your words, you can share the gospel. POWER!
3. Vows can act like spiritual agreements or covenants, especially when solemnly invoked.
 - a) Ex: Vows at marriage... consider the impact of divorce!

III. A Biblical Case Study from 2 Samuel 21

A. 2 Samuel 21:1, “Now there was a famine in the days of David for three years, year after year. And David sought the face of the LORD. And the LORD said, ‘There is bloodguilt on Saul and on his house, because he put the Gibeonites to death.’”

1. This famine wasn't random. God links it to Saul's violation of an oath made centuries earlier in Joshua 9, when Israel were deceived into protecting the Gibeonites.
2. The judgment is delayed until after Saul's death, but not forgotten.
3. David's response is vital: he seeks the face of the LORD... why?
4. When we experience long-standing hardship, do we simply endure, or do we ask God if there's a spiritual cause? Maybe there is, maybe there isn't

B. 2 Samuel 21:2, “So the king called the Gibeonites and spoke to them. (Now the Gibeonites were not of the people of Israel but of the remnant of the Amorites. Although the people of Israel had sworn to spare them, Saul had sought to strike them down in his zeal for the people of Israel and Judah.)”

1. The oath made to the Gibeonites was binding, even though they deceived Israel into it

2. Saul's somehow broke the covenant. We don't know the details, but God calls it "bloodguilt."

C. 2 Samuel 21:3, "And David said to the Gibeonites, 'What shall I do for you? And how shall I make atonement, that you may bless the heritage of the LORD?'"

1. David understands this is not a political offense but a spiritual breach.
2. He asks how he can make atonement—language associated with spiritual reconciliation and justice. (covering of blood, satisfaction for wrath)
3. Though Saul is dead, the covenant violation still affects the land.
4. NOTE: Covenants—like vows—may outlive the people who make them, but their effects persist until they are dealt with.

D. 2 Samuel 21:5–6, "They said to the king, 'The man who consumed us and planned to destroy us, so that we should have no place in all the territory of Israel, let seven of his sons be given to us, so that we may hang them before the LORD at Gibeah of Saul, the chosen of the LORD.' And the king said, 'I will give them.'"

1. Seven male descendants of Saul are demanded and given as atonement
2. They HANG them → cursed is anyone who hangs on a tree
 - a) The sons receive the curse of the broken vow
 - b) Atonement is made // wrath is satisfied // the covenant is repaired

E. 2 Samuel 21:14, "And they buried the bones of Saul and his son Jonathan in the land of Benjamin in Zela... And after that God responded to the plea for the land."

1. When the breach is addressed, God lifts the judgment.
2. Repentance and restoration open the way for mercy.
3. The broken vow defiled the land, but atonement made it right.

F. We see in 2 Samuel 21:

1. **Vows are not casual.** Even if they were made generations ago, their spiritual implications may still linger. (Cain's son....7 fold)
 - a) Ex: Hatfield & McCoys → "The feud may have been caused in part by Von Hippel–Lindau disease, a genetic disease in the McCoy family, which causes a predisposition to anger and rage." !!!
2. **Leadership matters.** Saul's poor leadership decision had national consequences as the "father of the nation." On the contrary, it says in Numbers that a husband or father can "void" a rash vow from one of his family members if he learns of it in time.
3. **God's justice makes a way for His mercy.** Once the covenant was honored, the blessing returned.
 - a) We see this on the cross. The justice of God poured out on Jesus makes the way for his mercy poured out on us

IV. But how do all these things in change in the NT?

- A. We have seen that God takes oaths in the OT very seriously...
- B. But what about now, under the New Covenant in Christ?
 1. Peter's vow and self-afflicted curse // Jesus' restoration
 2. Ananais and Saphira's broken vow
 3. James

C. JESUS – THE TRUE ATONEMENT

1. **Jesus is the better David**, who doesn't hand over someone else's sons for judgment, but gives Himself in their place (Hebrews 9:14).
 2. **Jesus is the curse-bearer**, who has silenced every accusation and canceled every sin debt (Colossians 2:14–15).
 - a) Jesus becomes the end of the curse → *"Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us..." Galatians 3:13*
 - b) In the Old Testament, breaking an oath or vow brought a curse
 - c) But in the New Covenant, Jesus bore the curse so that you and I don't have to be condemned for every broken vow or foolish word.
 - (1) He stood in our place, absorbing justice so we could receive mercy.
 - d) Where Saul's guilt caused famine in the land, Jesus' sacrifice brings spiritual rain and restoration.
 - (1) "There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus." — Romans 8:1
 3. **Jesus is the true Bridegroom**, who has the authority to void the foolish vows of His Bride (Numbers 30:12 → Ephesians 5:25).
 4. **The Gospel is ALWAYS the solution, not magic**. In Christ...
 - a) Broken vows are not final.
 - b) Generational patterns can be broken.
 - c) Self-cursing oaths can be renounced.
 - d) False loyalties can be released.
 - e) Shame can be removed.
- D. So, if you've made a vow in fear... If you've spoken words that bound you... If you're walking under a weight of shame or confusion... Jesus invites you to be free.
1. This does not mean all vows are automatically voided upon salvation, but it DOES mean that in repentance and faith, a believer can be freed from unholy vows because of Christ's authority and atonement.

V. How? Five Steps

- A. REVEAL** → Ask the Holy Spirit to show you what vows were made—by you or over you.
- B. REPENT** → Confess the vow as sin. It was sin to make it, sin to break it, sin to believe it, etc. Acknowledge that it may have given the enemy a foothold.
 1. "Confess your sins... and pray for one another that you may be healed." (James 5:16)
- C. RENOUNCE** → Speak it aloud in Jesus' name:
 1. "In the name of Jesus, I renounce and break the vow I made to _____. I cancel every agreement that hinders obedience to Christ or torments me."
 2. Jesus is the Vow Voider and Curse Breaker.
- D. REPLACE** → Speak truth over the lie.
 1. "I'll always be rejected" → "I am accepted in the Beloved." (Eph. 1:6)
 2. "I'll never be free" → "Whom the Son sets free is free indeed." (John 8:36)

E. **WALK IN FREEDOM** → Don't just pray it—live it.

1. Stand on the authority of Christ and walk in the power of the Spirit.

F. **CONCLUSION: Jesus Is Enough**

1. Let me leave you with this: Jesus is not only your Savior—
 - a) He is your Curse-Bearer, your Vow Voider, your Atoning Sacrifice.
2. The enemy may still have his disconnected fangs in your back—but they don't have to stay there.
3. Jesus has paid for the antidote.
4. You can walk in freedom.
5. Bring your words, your shame, your vows, your fear.
6. Let the blood of Jesus make you whole.
7. He is enough.