

Free From The Law

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[0 : 00] If you have a Bible with you, then I encourage you to open up your Bibles to Romans chapter 7.

Now, if you're using one of the Bibles that we have scattered around in the chairs amongst you, then you just need to turn to page 943. However, if you're using your own Bible and you're unfamiliar with the book of Romans, Romans is in the New Testament.

So to get to the New Testament, turn about two-thirds of the way through your Bible. Turn past Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, the Gospels. Turn past Acts, and then you'll find the book of Romans.

The first letter in our New Testament written by the Apostle Paul. And we have now spent several months traveling through the first six chapters of this book, and it's been a good journey.

It's been a good trip. It's been a lot of fun. We've learned a great deal from the Apostle Paul in these six chapters, but we're not even close to being finished learning from the Apostle Paul by means of what he wrote here in this book.

[1 : 14] So this morning we're going to dive in at chapter 7 and cover the first six verses of this great chapter. And so I want to encourage you guys to stand as we read God's Word together this morning.

Romans chapter 7, verse 1. Or do you not know, brothers, for I am speaking to those who know the law, that the law is binding on a person only as long as he lives.

For a married woman is bound by law to her husband while he lives. But if her husband dies, she is released from the law of marriage. Accordingly, she will be called an adulteress if she lives with another man while her husband is alive.

But if her husband dies, she's free from that law. And if she marries another man, she's not an adulteress. Likewise, my brothers, you also have died to the law through the body of Christ so that you may belong to another, to him who has been raised from the dead, in order that we may bear fruit for God.

For while we were living in the flesh, our sinful passions aroused by the law were at work in our members to bear fruit for death. But now we are released from the law, having died to that which held us captive so that we serve in the new way of the Spirit and not in the old way of the written code.

[2 : 44] Father, give us understanding, we ask this morning. Help us to come to a true, right apprehension of this passage.

We ask in Christ's name. Amen. Amen. You guys take a seat. You know, one of the things that happens to you if you're around kids very often, whether you have kids of your own or you just work with kids a lot, is that you get asked a lot of questions.

I can't even catalog the number of questions that I'm asked by my kids on an almost daily basis. I mean, all sorts of questions. And a lot of times, when you're asked a question, you have to make a choice in the moment.

Do I give them the easy answer that leaves out a lot of information? Or do I give them the more complicated answer that gives a lot of information but might wind up being information overload for my kid and then they don't understand anything that I've just said?

So, for instance, a kid might walk up to you and ask, Hey, where does the rain come from? Well, you could answer and you could say, Well, there's a process that God has set in motion in the world so that the water that we see around us in rivers and lakes and streams over time, because of atmospheric pressure and because of the heat of the sun, eventually evaporates.

[4 : 09] What that means is that the water itself becomes water vapor and it goes into the sky and eventually these water vapor molecules combine together and form clouds. Then, as the cloud becomes dense enough, it's overly full of water vapor and the water comes back into a liquid form and then falls to the earth.

Now, if you say that to a three-year-old, you have not helped them at all to understand where rain comes from or why it rains or how it rains. So that, on the other hand, you could give an equally true answer to a three-year-old and you could say, Well, God makes the rain fall from the clouds in the sky.

You see, neither answer is untrue. Both of them are true, though some of you might debate the details of how I've described the process of evaporation and all those sorts of things.

I'm not a scientist. You could get even more detailed if you want. But both answers are true answers. But nevertheless, depending upon your audience, depending upon who you're explaining things to, you're going to want to kind of decide how much detail to give.

Well, this morning, we're looking at beginning a series of messages through Romans 7 and 8 in which we are going to wrestle with one of the most difficult and complicated issues for the Christian to really get a handle on.

[5 : 31] And that is, what exactly are we supposed to do with the Old Testament law? What exactly, as Christians, are we supposed to do with all of those commandments that we find in the Old Testament, particularly the ones that we find from Moses himself.

We call it the law of Moses or we call it the law of Sinai. Those laws that in the Old Testament Moses received from God as he was up on the mountain and the people of Israel were waiting down at the bottom.

Now, we know some of those laws. If you've been exposed in any way to the Bible or to Christianity, you know some of the laws. So we, most of us, are at least somewhat familiar with the Ten Commandments.

And we know that the Ten Commandments tell us you shall not murder, you shall not steal, and those sorts of things. And so we know a little bit about what those laws are. But the question is not what are those laws?

The question is what do we do with those laws? And not merely those laws, but all of the laws of the law of Moses. Because the law of Moses is a collection of a whole lot of commandments that God gave to Israel.

[6 : 43] And one of the things that we find happening a lot of times in today's culture and in today's world is that the law, I find, is often being used by non-Christians to beat up on Christians.

So that, for instance, they will quote a passage from the Old Testament, perhaps from the book of Leviticus or maybe from the book of Deuteronomy. They will quote a law. They will quote a commandment.

One that you might find difficult, if not impossible, to apply in today's world or one that Christians don't obey in today's world under the New Covenant.

For instance, there are numerous laws about what foods we can eat and what foods we're not supposed to eat. There are numerous laws about what sort of clothing you're supposed to wear. There are laws governing relationships between people in the Old Testament.

And the question always becomes what do we do with all of those? What do we do with them? We know that the food laws, for instance, Jesus Himself abrogated. Jesus Himself tells us that we no longer have to obey the food laws.

[7 : 44] Mark comments in the Gospel of Mark chapter 10 that Jesus declared all foods clean. And we see that happening also in the book of Acts where Peter has a vision and God tells Peter, you no longer have to follow the old food laws that I gave through Moses.

And so we know just on the surface that many of the laws of the Old Testament, many of the individual commands found in the law of Moses no longer apply to us today as Christians.

They apply to Old Testament Israel, but they no longer apply to us today. But what do we do with the rest of the law? How do we handle the law? How do we think about the law?

How do we approach the law? This chapter, as well as the first half of chapter 8 is written by the Apostle Paul to help us to come to a clear understanding of how do we interact with the law of Moses.

Because Paul has said some provocative things so far in the book of Romans about the law of Moses. He has told us, for instance, in chapter 3 that no one is justified.

[8 : 50] That is, no one is declared righteous by God on the basis of the works of the law. He has told us that we cannot get right with God by obeying the laws of Moses.

Okay, that applies to our salvation. That applies to the issue of how do you become a Christian? The answer is not by obeying the law, but simply by faith in Christ alone and what He has accomplished for us on the cross.

But what about your life after you've become a Christian? What then? What do we do with the law now that we are followers of Christ? Paul has also said provocative things about the relationship of the law to the life of a Christian.

And so, for instance, if you look back in your Bibles one chapter to Romans chapter 6, Paul says in verse 14 that sin will not have dominion over you since you are not under law but under grace.

Paul says explicitly we are not under the law. And then he leaves that after verses 14 and 15 and he does not come back to explain what he means by saying that Christians are not under the law until now in chapter 7 and the first half of chapter 8.

[10 : 09] And so we're beginning to address this really crucial issue that is hinted at in chapter 6 but not taken up in full in chapter 7. And what we're going to see this morning in the first 6 verses of Romans chapter 7 is the simple answer.

In other words, it's the short answer that Paul gives initially to the question what is the relationship of a follower of Christ to the law of Moses? But then, in the rest of chapter 7 and for the first 17 verses of chapter 8, Paul's going to unpack what he says in these first 6 verses and he's going to give us the more complicated answer to the question.

And so we have on the one hand a simple task this morning and on the other hand a complicated task. We have a simple task because we're covering the simple, straightforward answer that the Apostle Paul gives in these first 6 verses of the chapter.

We have a complicated task though because when Paul originally wrote the book of Romans, the church of Rome to whom he wrote this book would not have had a Sunday like we have where they simply read the first 7 verses of chapter 7, closed their Bibles and were done for the day.

No. They would have read the entirety of the book of Romans all in one sitting. That's how Paul intended for the church in Rome to receive this letter. Not to have it broken down in pieces, but to have them read it all at once at the same time.

[11 : 39] Initially, that's how they would have heard this book. Now after that, there would have been in subsequent weeks probably a breaking down of this book much the same way that we're doing it now. But the danger of breaking down a book like that into bits and pieces is that if you don't see the portion that you're covering in relation to everything else around you, it's very easy to distort Paul's message.

So I say that this morning's sermon is simple yet complicated because we cannot limit ourselves to these first six verses without at least touching upon things that he says later on.

Otherwise, I think that we will come to a great misunderstanding of our relationship with the law. So we're going this morning to focus on the first six verses, but we're going to jump off periodically at times and look at things that Paul says elsewhere in the book of Romans so that we don't go too far in one direction or the other.

Because there are really two errors that you want to avoid any time you're asking the question, what do we do with the law as a Christian? Those two errors have fancy names that you don't have to remember.

On the one hand, we want to avoid what is often called antinomianism. It just means against the law-ism. We want to avoid the attitude that says that the law has no place for the Christian.

[13 : 01] The law has no role in the life of a Christian. We want to avoid that conclusion. But then on the other hand, we want to avoid legalism. We don't want to end up being people who measure every moment of our lives by our adherence to a bunch of rules and regulations.

So we're going to try to avoid those extremes while arriving at a right understanding of what Paul says in these first six verses in light of everything else that he says.

You follow me? Alright, good. I haven't lost you yet. So let's get to the simple stuff first and then we'll jump off into the more complicated stuff. This passage, these six verses are easy to see how they're outlined.

Paul gives a basic principle in verse 1. He says, Do you not know, brothers, for I'm speaking to those who know the law, here's the principle, that the law, that's the law of Moses, understand when he says law he means the law of Moses, ten commandments plus the other commands.

Do you not know that the law is binding on a person only as long as he lives? So that's a basic principle that Paul states because the Jewish rabbis would ask questions.

[14 : 12] They love to ask questions and debate among themselves. And one of the questions they would ask is, How long is the law binding? And the typical answer that the rabbis would give is, Once you die, the law is not binding on you anymore.

So Paul just cites that generally accepted principle from the Jewish rabbis and says, Don't you know that the law is only binding on a person as long as that person is alive?

You don't have to follow the law when you're dead. The law is written for people that are still alive living in this life. And then he gives an illustration. He illustrates by way of marriage and divorce.

Now this is not a passage about marriage and divorce. So this is not a sermon about marriage and divorce. But in verses 2 and 3, Paul looks at the example of marriage and divorce to help us to understand our relationship to the law.

Notice what he says. He says, A married woman is bound by law to her husband as long as he's alive while he lives. But, if her husband dies, then she's released from the law of marriage.

- [15 : 17] So there's your example of the principle. The principle is, a person is only bound to the law as long as they're alive. The application is, take a look at the issue of marriage. A woman is bound to her husband so long as her husband is alive.
- But if her husband dies, the law of marriage no longer applies. So that death has the effect of nullifying the law. That's the effect of death.
- And then he continues on. Verse 3, Accordingly, she will be called an adulteress. That is, she'll be labeled a lawbreaker. She'll be called an adulteress if she lives with another man while her husband is alive.
- That's not complicated. But, if her husband dies, she's free from that law. And if she marries another man, she's not an adulteress. So it's a fairly straightforward, simple illustration of the principle that death severs your relationship with the law.
- Death ends your adherence to the law. In the case of marriage, if a woman's husband dies, she's no longer bound by law to the husband.
- [16 : 24] She can marry someone else and she's not guilty of breaking the law and becoming an adulteress. So much for the illustration. Now for the application.
- The application is where we begin to dive into the issue of what is our relationship as a Christian to the law of Moses. Notice verse 4. Likewise, so in the same way that by the death of her husband a woman is freed from the law, likewise, my brothers, you also have died to the law through the body of Christ.
- So there has been a death that has occurred in the life of every Christian. A death has occurred and death as he has said, death severs your relationship with the law.
- What death has occurred? Look at chapter 6 verse 3. Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?
- Or chapter 6 verse 5. We have been united with him in a death like his. Verse 6. Our old self was crucified with him.
- [17 : 37] So that when we put our faith in Christ, Paul says that that faith unites us to Jesus. We become in a very real sense one with Christ.
- so that his death counts as our death. And his resurrection life, Paul goes on to say, will be counted as ours and will be raised from the dead someday.
- But the point that he wants to make here in chapter 7 is that you have died. You've died with Christ. And since you've died with Christ, your relationship to the law of Moses has been fundamentally altered.
- altered. So Paul now thinks of our relationship to the law as belonging to two categories. Category number one, you are under the law. You have to obey the law.
- You have to do everything that the law says. Category number two, you're no longer under the law. You have died to the law. So there's the simple answer.
- [18 : 40] What is our relationship to the law? Well, if you're not a Christian, you're still under the law. The law still rules over your life and you have to endeavor in everything that you do to obey it.
- Or, category number two, if you're a Christian, you've died to the law, you're not under the law, you've been set free from the law. That's the very simple, straightforward answer.
- Now, he's going to begin to elaborate on that in the next couple of verses. He's going to begin the process of helping us to see how that actually matters in your everyday life.
- He's going to help us to see how that actually changes and transforms the way that you think and the way that you live. These next few verses actually outline the rest of chapter 7 and the first half of chapter 8 for us.

Let me show you what I mean. Verse 5. Well, the middle of verse, we'll finish verse 4. Likewise, my brothers, you also have died to the law through the body of Christ.

[19 : 47] That's how you died. So that, so there's a purpose in dying, so that you may belong to another. So just as when the woman's husband died, she's now free to be married to another.

Well, now that we have died with Christ, we are now freed to be married to someone other than the law, something other than the law. We can enter into a new relationship.

in order that, he says, that we may belong to another, excuse me, to him who has been raised from the dead. So the goal here of dying with Christ is so that our relationship to the law is severed, and now a new relationship can be begun with Jesus himself.

We have, in our lives now, we interact with God in a new way. We no longer interact with God primarily on the basis of law. Now we interact with God primarily on the basis of union with Jesus.

That's how we interact with God now. That's how we relate to him. Not through a checklist, not through making sure that we've done all the right things. Rather, we relate to him through his son and through the work that his son has performed on our behalf.

[21 : 05] He's going to go on to describe it in more detail. There's a purpose to all this. It's that we might bear fruit for God at the end of verse 4. We'll come back to that in just a moment. Verse 5.

For while we were living in the flesh, so before you had trusted in Christ, before you were converted, before you became a Christian, while we were living in the flesh, our sinful passions, aroused by the law, were at work in our members to bear fruit for death.

Now Paul is describing the relationship that a person has with the law apart from Christ. How does the non-Christian relate to the law? Or what effect does the law of Moses have on someone who does not know Jesus?

Paul spells it out very, very clearly. While we were living in the flesh, before we knew Christ, our sinful desires were aroused by the law, and so therefore, they were bearing fruit for death.

In other words, the law, far from making us into better people, the law was actually causing us to become worse sinners. Why? Because when people who are fallen and sinful come into contact with a command, our response is not to bow down before that command.

[22 : 26] Our natural response is not to immediately say, I better do what the law says. Our response is to bristle. Our response is to rebel. Our response is to do the opposite of what the law itself says.

That's the natural response of a person outside of Christ. That is the natural response of a sinner, or as Paul says, one who is in the flesh.

When Paul says, while we were in the flesh, he doesn't mean while we were living in physical bodies. It's easy to mistake it that way because when we think of flesh, we think of nothing more than our physical bodies.

But Paul is writing to people who are still living in their physical bodies. He himself is still living in a physical body. But he writes in the past tense and says, while we were living in the flesh.

Which means, though he's still alive in his physical body, though the Roman Christians still possess physical bodies, they are no longer in the flesh now. They used to be in the flesh.

[23 : 29] So the flesh refers not to life in our physical bodies alone, the flesh refers to living according to our sinful natures.

Our old sinful natures, our sinful desires that we have inherited from Adam, govern our lives. And when you are governed by your sinful nature, when law comes in, your response is not to bow down before the law, your response is to rebel against the law.

Now Paul is going to explain that in much, much more detail in verses 7 through 13. You can glance down at those verses and you can see that Paul is going to dive headlong into that issue of how in the world does the law produce sin rather than curb sin.

Notice what he says, verse 8, sin, seizing an opportunity through the commandment, produced in me all kinds of covetousness. Apart from the law, sin lies dead. I was once alive apart from the law, but when the commandment came, sin came alive and I died.

Verse 11, he says that sin seizes an opportunity through the commandment. Sin uses the law to incite rebellion in us.

[24 : 47] So that if you're in the flesh, if you have not trusted in Christ, and the law of Moses comes against you, or comes upon you, your response naturally will be rebellion.

But there's another state of existence. There's another way of living. What about those who are in Christ? What about those who have trusted in Him, whom Paul says are no longer under the law?

How do we relate to the law? Notice, go back up, verse 6. But now, so there's a contrast. You were in the flesh, but now something else is true about you if you've trusted in Christ.

But now we are released from the law, having died to that which held us captive, so that we serve in the new way of the spirit and not in the old way of the written code.

So the short answer, what is the Christian's relationship to the law, is this. We are released from the law. We have died to the law, and now we serve in a new way.

[26 : 03] We don't serve God now as followers of Jesus by checking off all the boxes. We don't serve God by self-effort.

No. Now we serve God in a new way, Paul says. The way of the spirit. Because when you trust in Christ, the Holy Spirit comes to live within you, and he begins to do something to you.

He begins to change you. He begins to transform you. And so Paul says, the way to bear fruit for God is not by self-determination.

The way to bear fruit for God is not to buckle down and try to obey the law in your own strength. Your flesh. You'll rebel against it eventually.

No. The way to bear fruit for God is to have the Holy Spirit living within you, and to now serve God, not in the letter, not by the law, but now by the power of the Holy Spirit.

[27 : 05] We are not under the law. We are free from the law. We've died to the law, and now we serve God by the power of the Holy Spirit. Now, if we stop here, if we pause here, and we've done enough for us to have a basic grasp, a basic understanding of these first six verses, but if we stop here, we may fall into the error of what I call antinomianism.

Because if you tell a person you're not under the law, you've died from the law, you've been released or set free from the law, if you tell a person all of those things, and don't tell them anything else, the conclusion that they will draw is, then I don't have to ever think about the law again.

I don't have to ever try to obey the law again. I don't have to care whether or not my life measures up to the standards of God's law. I'm free from all of that.

I don't need any of that anymore. more. It seems as if the first six verses of this chapter, on their own and by themselves, would lead a person to that conclusion.

But I think if you read these verses in connection to the rest of this chapter, and especially chapter 8, you'll draw entirely different conclusions.

[28 : 30] I said that these verses here, 4 and 5 and 6, outline the rest of chapter 7 and the first part of chapter 8. I also said that these verses present two ways, two approaches to life, or as Paul calls them in verse 6, two ways of attempting to serve God.

You can attempt to serve God by your adherence to the letter of the law or in the flesh, or you can attempt to serve God by or in the spirit. Two ways.

Well, now, throughout the rest of this chapter, in chapter 8, Paul is going to show us what it looks like to pursue those different paths, both of them aimed at obedience to God, both of them aimed at bearing fruit for God, but far, far different results.

So that beginning in verse 7, all the way down to the end of this chapter, Paul describes in vivid detail what it looks like when a person by their own power in the flesh tries to obey the law of God.

What that looks like. And I'll tell you what it looks like in one word, and we'll tease this out over the next couple of weeks, but it looks like failure. No matter how much we might determine, no matter how set we might be to obey the law of God, in our own strength, by the power of our own flesh, we will only fail.

[30 : 01] We are destined for failure if we aim to bear fruit for God by obeying the law in our own strength. But, what if we seek to serve God in another way?

What if we seek to serve God rather than through the letter of the law, but through the power of the Holy Spirit? What will result then? Well, that's what the first half of chapter 8 is all about.

The first 17 verses of chapter 8 describe for us what the Christian life lived through the power of the Holy Spirit looks like. And there's one verse, I think, that is key for us this morning to help us to avoid the trap of thinking that the law has no place in our lives.

Romans chapter 8, take a look down here in verse 4. We'll begin in verse 4.

Or verse 3, rather. For God has done what the law, the law of Moses, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending his own son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh.

[31 : 17] Now notice verse 4. Verses 2 and 3, or verse 3 is all about how we get right with God. How does that happen? God sent his son. His son takes upon himself what we deserve.

So God condemns our sin in the son. That's what he has done. But there's a purpose. There's a reason for all this, verse 4. In order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who walk not according to the flesh.

So that was option number one. We're not doing that. But according to the spirit. So what is the result? What is the relationship between a person who tries to serve God in the spirit and the law of Moses?

The result is fulfillment of the law. So that we have this strange kind of process by which we are no longer aiming primarily at checking off our boxes and aiming primarily at adherence to every command.

We are aiming at submission to the spirit, being led by the spirit, and as a result of that, we fulfill the law. We obey the law by submitting ourselves to the Holy Spirit.

[32 : 37] So it's not as if we've forgotten about the law. It's not as if we've left the law in the past. But through the power of the Holy Spirit, God enables us and causes us to actually fulfill, that is, to actually obey the law.

If you say, well, what law? What specifically does it have in mind? Because we don't have to obey the food laws. Jesus said we didn't have to. Peter, it was revealed to Peter in a vision that Christians don't have to obey all of the food laws.

So, what laws does the spirit cause us to fulfill? What portion of the law of Moses still stands today and is fulfilled by those who submit themselves to the work of the Holy Spirit within their lives?

Turn over to Romans 13 where we get a really clear picture of this. Romans chapter 13 verse 8, Paul says, O no one anything except to love each other.

For the one who loves another has fulfilled the laws. It's the same word that we find in chapter 8. The law is fulfilled. How?

[33 : 56] Through love. Verse 9, For the commandments, you shall not commit adultery, you shall not murder, you shall not steal, you shall not covet.

And any other commandment are summed up in this word, you shall love your neighbor as yourself. The law is summed up in a simple command.

Love your neighbor as yourself. It's not complicated. In fact, Paul didn't invent this concept. He's drawing on the teachings of Christ here.

Christ himself, when asked about the greatest commandment, lists two commandments. First, love the Lord your God. Secondly, love your neighbor as yourself. And Jesus himself says, all of the law is summed up in these two commandments.

The command to love God and the command to love your neighbor as yourself. So when Paul says in Romans chapter 8, that the Spirit causes us to fulfill the law, he means that the Holy Spirit produces real, genuine love in our lives and that love is expressed as obedience to these kinds of commands.

[35 : 14] What kinds of commands are these in Romans 13? Traditionally, theologians have divided up the law of Moses into three parts. Right? They've talked about the ceremonial law, which would be the food laws and all the regulations for the temple and all the sacrifices that have to be made.

We call that the ceremonial law. And because Jesus declared all foods clean and because according to the book of Hebrews, Jesus has fulfilled the meaning of the entire sacrificial system, all of those laws, all of the food laws, all of the laws regulating what you can wear when you come into the temple or what you can do when you come into the temple or what kind of sacrifices you're supposed to make.

All of those laws no longer apply to people who trust in Christ. They no longer apply. So we have the ceremonial law which has been set aside by Christ and His work on the cross.

And then secondly, you have the civil law. Those laws that govern the nation of Israel, not in the temple zones, not in the areas in which you were dealing with religious issues, but just the governing of the nation.

Many, many laws that you find in Leviticus and Deuteronomy that tell Israel how they're supposed to deal with one another and how they're supposed to deal with the surrounding nations.

[36 : 38] How is the government of Israel to function? And so there are lots of rules. There are lots of punishments that are laid out in the civil law. We do not see those under the new covenant, in the New Testament.

We don't see those applied within the church. So, for instance, we don't stone our children when they disobey us.

Or at least I hope you don't stone your kids when they disobey you. Our children's ministry would be very, very small if we stoned our kids when they disobeyed. Right? We don't stone those who commit adultery.

We don't do that anymore. Those were civil laws. Laws that were intended to be enacted in Israel to govern the behavior of the people. So that there were all sorts of laws. Laws governing divorce.

Laws governing slavery. None of those laws apply within the new covenant people of God. That is, none of those laws apply to those who have trusted in Christ and who are in the church now.

[37 : 38] But there's a third part of the law. It's called the moral law. That includes these commands that Paul lists in Romans 13. It is essentially the second half of the Ten Commandments.

You're not supposed to commit adultery. Children are to obey their parents. You're not supposed to steal. You're not supposed to lie. You're not supposed to murder. You're not supposed to covet other people's things.

Those are the moral law of God. Now, it would be tempting to simply say that Christians are not bound by the civil or the ceremonial law, but we are still bound by the moral law.

That would be an easy way to help you to see and understand your relationship to the law. Don't worry about the laws of the temple. Don't worry about the food laws. Don't worry about the civil laws. Just pay attention to the moral law.

Make sure your life lines up with the moral law and you'll be good. But it's not quite that simple. Because if we just try to obey the moral law, we will fail utterly and absolutely.

[38 : 49] Even if on the surface we can say that we've obeyed those things, we will have missed the point. Because all of those laws, all of the moral law, is an expression and a working out of the one great command, love your neighbor as yourself.

So you all remember the story of the rich young ruler, I hope, from the Gospels. It's the story of a young man. He was obviously wealthy and influential in society. And he came to Jesus and he asked Jesus a simple question.

Probably the same question that you would ask Jesus if you came into contact with Jesus. Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life? That's an important question.

And if you're going to ask anybody that kind of question, you need to ask Jesus. Jesus, what should I do so that I can have eternal life? I don't want to go to hell. I don't want to burn forever. I want to live forever in the presence of God.

What do I need to do to get eternal life? Jesus says, you know the commands. And he lists off the moral commands. He lists them off. You shall not commit adultery.

[39 : 55] Honor your father and mother. You shall not steal. Jesus lists off the moral law. You know the commands. Obey those. And the young man says, I've done all that. Good.

And you can see, you can almost visualize a smile across his face as if he feels, I've done it. I've obeyed the commands. But Jesus knows it's only a surface level obedience.

Sure, outwardly it looks like adherence to the moral law, but it's merely at the surface level. He has not loved God above all else, nor loved his neighbor as himself.

Because Jesus looks at the man next and says, alright, then go and sell everything you have, give it to the poor, then you'll have eternal life.

What? Is Jesus telling this man that if he'll just do one more thing, he'll actually earn eternal life? No. That's not his point. His point is, in all of your external obedience, you have not fulfilled the law of love.

[41 : 01] You've missed the entire point of the second half of the Ten Commandments, which is all about loving your neighbor. If you loved your neighbor, you would be willing to sell your stuff and give away your money to the poor.

But you don't love your neighbor. You don't. And so all of your outward external obedience to those moral commandments doesn't count for anything.

So it's not as simple as saying, Christian, check off the boxes that apply to the moral law, pay attention to the second half of the Ten Commandments, and you'll be good to go.

That would miss the point entirely. The Christian's relationship to the law is more complicated than that and at the same time more simple than that.

Our goal is singular. to love your neighbor as yourself. And the only way that you can become a person who loves their neighbor is if the Holy Spirit takes up residence within you and begins to change and transform who you are.

[42 : 10] There's no other way. You might be like the rich young ruler. You might externally look like a loving person. People around you might think that you are a very good, obedient person, an upstanding citizen, but beneath all of that is a lack of fundamental love for neighbor because that can only be instilled within you by the power of the Holy Spirit.

The Spirit must come within. The Spirit must change you and make you into a loving person. So it's simple. You just need to love your neighbor. But wait.

One more thing. The law still has a place for us because if we only have the command to love your neighbor, then we will be tempted to define love in a way that suits our actions.

We will be tempted to come up with a definition of love that in the end is not loving toward others. And we see this happening all the time around us now so that we are told by society it is not loving to say that homosexuality is wrong.

That's not loving. That's intolerant. You shouldn't say those kinds of things. That's an unloving thing to do. Redefining love according to one's own standards. But if that lifestyle is a path to eternal destruction, the only loving thing that you can do is to say don't go that direction.

[43 : 52] There is always the temptation whether in the culture or even within the church to redefine love to fit our already preconceived notions about how we want to live our lives.

And so yes it is simple. The Holy Spirit comes to live within you and He makes you a loving person and you therefore fulfill the moral law. But we are incredibly adept at deceiving ourselves.

And we can deceive ourselves and make ourselves think that we have been loving when we have not. And so the moral law still has a function for us. The moral law shows us what love really looks like.

It gives us a picture a vivid picture of what our lives will look like if we love our neighbor as ourselves. So for instance you don't love your neighbor if you covet all the things that he has.

You don't love your neighbor. Loving your neighbor would be rejoicing in all the blessings that he has received from God. But if you don't rejoice in his blessings but you covet them you grow bitter you grow angry because those things are not yours you don't love your neighbor if you covet.

[45 : 11] You don't love the neighbor closest to you you don't love your spouse unless you're faithful to them. And yet there are all sorts of people arguing today for all sorts of forms of adultery and trying to make it acceptable and still say you're in a loving relationship.

It can't be done. The moral law serves to show us what love for your neighbor looks like and the Holy Spirit enables us to become loving people.

So how do you know at the end of the day? How do you know whether or not genuine love for your neighbor is being produced? How do you know whether or not you're serving God in the Spirit rather than by the letter of the law?

It's not as complicated as it may seem. It's really not. Two things. Two things. Remember that you are not under the condemning power of the law anymore and therefore you do not walk around with a sense of guilt but you are cleansed through the blood of Christ and so you're no longer trying to earn God's favor you have it through Jesus.

And then secondly submit to the power of the Holy Spirit into His work in your life and know that His power is manifest and mediated to us through this book.

[46 : 35] The law has a role. The Spirit who inspired the law on the mountain with Moses and inspired Paul to comment on that law that same Spirit through this same word works to transform you and change you.

How do you know? How do you know? Heartfelt Spirit led fulfillment of the law of love looks like honoring your parents.

Not committing adultery and not stealing. Not coveting. Not harming others. It looks like obedience to the commands motivated by sincere real love.

A love that can only be produced in you by the Holy Spirit. And so we want to avoid becoming legalists and just checking off the boxes.

We want to avoid being antinomians against the law and ignoring the law entirely and the only way that we can avoid those two things is through the power of the Holy Spirit transforming us making us loving testing whether or not we are loving by the moral law of God.

[47 : 55] Let's pray.