

The Law and Sin

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[0 : 0 0] I want to ask you guys, if you have a copy of the scriptures, to open up to the book of Romans.

We're going to be in Romans chapter 7. This is our second week in this chapter we began, covering the first six verses last week in Romans chapter 7. And so now we'll be looking at verses 7 all the way down through verse 13.

And before we jump in here to read, I want to say a couple of things that I've said in the last couple of weeks, or in the last few weeks, regarding this book and regarding Paul's language here.

First of all, we're going to come across the term law several times as we're reading it just in this paragraph. We're going to see it. And I want you to understand and know that when Paul mentions the law here in this context, he's not talking about our modern day laws.

He's talking about his law. He's talking about the law that he gave primarily through Moses to the people of Israel. The law that is summarized in the Ten Commandments, but that contains many, many other commandments as well.

[1 : 1 0] And so when we see law in this text, I want you to understand that that's the law of God, or the law of Moses, or the Sinai law. I also, Sinai law, also, we're going throughout this sermon to make mention, I'm going to make mention of two things, the flesh and the spirit.

The flesh I said last week is not merely our physical bodies, but our flesh is all of our sinful tendencies. You might even say our sinful nature itself. And so when I mention that term throughout this sermon, I want you to understand I don't simply mean your physical bodies, though your physical body is not unaffected by your sinful nature, but I mean more than that.

The apostle Paul means more than that. And when we speak of the spirit in this passage, Paul's not speaking of our spirit, but of the Holy Spirit who comes to dwell within all those who trust in Jesus.

So those definitions out of the way, I think we're ready to read the scriptures. So I want to ask you guys to stand with me as we read together. Romans chapter 7, beginning in verse 7, Paul writes, What then shall we say?

That the law is sin? By no means. Yet if it had not been for the law, I would not have known sin. For I would not have known what it is to covet if the law had not said, You shall not covet.

[2 : 2 2] But sin, seizing an opportunity through the commandment, produced in me all kinds of covetousness. For 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.

The very commandment that promised life proved to be death to me. For sin, seizing an opportunity through the commandment, deceived me and through it killed me.

So the law is holy and the commandment is holy and righteous and good. Did that which is good then bring death to me? By no means. It was sin producing death in me through what is good, in order that sin might be shown to be sin, and through the commandment might become sinful beyond measure.

Father, we come in thanks that we have these words here, inspired by your spirit and written by Paul. And I ask this morning that you would give us insight and understanding into exactly what is meant in this paragraph.

I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. You guys take a seat. This passage begins by asking what would be, if you've not been reading through Romans, if you just jumped in the middle of chapter 7, or if you've not been walking slowly through Romans with the rest of us, this passage begins with what would seem to be a strange question.

[3 : 51] Why does the Apostle Paul begin by asking this strange question? Is the law sin? Is it? That's a strange question when you realize that God is in fact, as we said, talking about His own law.

Paul was talking about the law of God, the law of Moses. So to begin with this question seems a bit strange. Is the law sin? What shall we say here? Is it sin that the law is sin?

That's a strange question. Unless, of course, you've been paying attention through this letter and you've noticed many of the things that the Apostle Paul has said in reference to the law of Moses or the law of God.

So, for instance, we talked about this last week. The Apostle Paul has told us throughout this letter that nobody can get right with God by obeying His law. That is, nobody can be justified before God by obeying the law.

That pertains to how we actually get into the family of God. How can we become a person who has the safety and security of knowing that our eternity is set and secure for us?

[4 : 53] It's not by the law. It's not by good works. It's not by attempting to obey all of the Ten Commandments or even all of the laws of Moses written down there in the Torah. That's not it.

That's not the answer, Paul says. It's by faith in Christ. We, he says, are justified by faith apart from works of the law. So he has said that entrance into the Christian life does not involve submission to the law.

It does not involve an attempt to fulfill the law. That's not how we come to be in Christ. That's not how we come to be Christians. It's not how we get saved or justified before God.

But he's gone beyond that. He has said more than that because he says more than simply, it's not by the law that you become a Christian. He has told us that as a Christian, you are not under the law.

So if you just look up a few verses or a chapter or so into chapter 6, verses 14 and 15, he tells us there, For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law, but under grace.

[5 : 55] He asks the question, what then? Are we to sin because we are not under law, but under grace? So not only do we not become a Christian by obeying the law, but those of us who are followers of Jesus are not under the law.

And then last week in the first paragraph of this chapter, we've seen that Paul unpacks that terminology, and he tells us that to no longer be under the law means that you are now dead to the law.

You are now set free from the law. He says those things which prompts him to ask the question, if all of that is true, if through Christ our relationship to the law of God has been fundamentally altered, so that the most basic thing that we can say about ourselves and God's law is, we're not under it, we're dead to it, then he asks the question, then is there something wrong with the law?

Because he's also told us, in chapter 7, he has told us that sin has used the law to produce death. Notice, just look up a few verses in chapter 7.

He says in verse 4, Like 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.

[7 : 13] That's good. Bearing fruit for God is good. But 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. That's bad. But the sinful nature, the flesh, used the law to bear fruit for death.

So if we're not saved by obeying the law, if we're not under the law, if we are in fact now set free from the law, and the law itself, when it comes into contact with us, bears the fruit of death, the basic question you want to ask then is, is there something wrong with the law?

If the law needs, if we need to be set free from it, and if in fact the law leads to our death, then is there something fundamentally wrong with the law?

Is the law itself sin? And Paul's answer is to the point, very quick and very concise, he says in verse 7, By no means.

Or some of your translations might say, God forbid, or in no way. This is the strongest way that Paul can say no. No, absolutely not, he says. The law is not sinful.

[8 : 17] The law itself is not broken. There's nothing wrong with the law. So then that creates a problem for us. If there's nothing wrong with the law itself, and yet we need to be set free from the law, and when the law comes into contact with us, it produces death in us, what's the issue?

If the law is okay, if there's nothing wrong with the law, then what in fact is the issue? Look down at the end, near the end of our paragraph here in verse 12. Paul's very specific.

So the law is holy, and the commandment is holy, and righteous, and good. So the law is good, the law is holy, and yet the law in our lives produces death, or leads to the production of the fruit of death.

How can that be? What is the problem? And Paul's answer is, sin is the problem. Now remember, throughout this passage, sin is not conceived of by Paul as merely the things that we do that are wrong, but Paul pictures sin here as a power at work within sinful humanity.

Sin is a power that wants to rule and reign over you, he tells us in chapter 6. And so sin is the problem. Sin trying to rule over you, sin trying to be your master is the problem, and sin is so good at this, sin is so deceptive, that sin can make use of a good, holy, and righteous law in order to bring about death for us.

[9 : 49] Look in verse 7, the second half of it. Yet if it had not been for the law, I would not have known sin, for I would not have known what it is to covet if the law had said, you shall not covet.

But sin, seizing and opportunity through the commandment, produced in me all kinds of covetousness. For apart from the law, sin lies dead.

Move down to verse 10. The very commandment that promised life proved to be death to me. Down to the middle of verse 13. It was sin producing death in me through what is good.

So sin uses the good thing, the law of God, to produce death in us. How does that happen? How does sin make use of God's law to produce death inside of human beings?

How does that happen? You have to ask another more fundamental question. And the more fundamental question is this. Why does sin, sins that we commit, why do they lead to death?

[10 : 54] Why is that in fact the case? Why is there a connection between us sinning and then us receiving both spiritual death now and physical death later on?

Why is there a connection there? Who established that connection? And the answer is, God himself established the connection between sin and death in his word, in the law.

So if you look up to Romans chapter 6 verse 23, we spent some time on this verse. Paul says, the wages of sin is death. That's the payment that sin pays.

But who determined that? Who set the minimum wage for working for sin at death? God himself has done that. For instance, you can go all the way back to the beginning.

You can go all the way back to Genesis chapter 2, where God issues the first command to humanity, to Adam and Eve, telling them not to eat of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. And he tells Adam and Eve that in the day that you eat of it, you will surely die.

[11 : 54] God, at the very beginning, establishes a connection between his word, his commandment, his law, and death. And the connection is, if you violate God's word, if you disobey God's command, then the punishment is death.

Or in the language of Romans 6 verse 23, the payment that you receive, the minimum wages of sin, is in fact death. But that's not only the case in Genesis, that's the case throughout Scripture.

So that you can fast forward from Genesis all the way to the law of Moses, and we can see the same thing operative in the law of Moses. We can see God promising his covenant people, Israel, that if they violate the covenant that he's made with them, that is, if they disobey the law that he's given through Moses, he's going to bring curses upon them.

And those curses will end in their death. Hold your place in Romans 7. I want you to see this for yourself. Turn to Deuteronomy chapter 28. Deuteronomy chapter 28 is a fascinating chapter.

It comes after God has given the Ten Commandments, after God has even elaborated on the Ten Commandments with more commandments. And at the beginning of chapter 28, he tells the people of Israel, these are the blessings that I will give you if you obey my word.

[13 : 11] But he also tells them that they won't obey his word. They're destined to fail at this, so they won't receive these blessings. And then he turns in verse 15 and begins to tell them about curses that will fall upon them when they disobey his law.

Verse 15, Deuteronomy 28. But if you will not obey the voice of the Lord your God or be careful to do all of his commandments and his statutes that I command you today, then all these curses shall come upon you and overtake you.

Move down to verse 20. The Lord will send on you curses, confusion and frustration in all that you undertake to do until you are destroyed and perish quickly on account of the evil of your deeds because you have forsaken me.

So both at creation and in the giving of the law to Moses, two of the most significant events recorded in the Old Testament, God establishes a connection between the law and sin and death by saying that the penalty for breaking the law is death.

And so sin makes use of that basic principle woven into the fabric of creation and into God's law to produce death in us. If sin as a taskmaster can get us to break God's law, then sin can bring upon us the curse of death and that's exactly what Paul was telling us here in Romans 7 that sin aims to do and sin has in fact done in your life.

[14 : 40] All of us are law breakers. We are. All of us. At the beginning of this chapter, Paul directed his instructions here in chapter 7 toward those who know the law.

Look at chapter 7 verse 1. I am speaking to those who know the law. That's all of us. We've heard God's law. If you've been exposed in any way to Scripture, if you've been exposed in any way to Christianity, you've heard some of God's law almost by virtue of just being a member of what's called Western world, Western society, Europe and America.

We've been exposed to certain aspects of God's law. It's enshrined. Do not murder. Do not steal. Do not kill. But even beyond that, Paul says in Romans chapter 2 that the law of God is written upon our hearts so that sin uses the law, the written law of Moses, the law of God written upon our hearts.

Sin uses law which comes with the penalty of death in order to bear the fruit of death. It produces death within us. It's a key connection.

It's beginning to understand the real problem that we face. But the problem is actually greater than that.

[15 : 57] Sin not only uses the law to produce death in us, but sin uses the law to produce more sin in us.

Did you notice what Paul said? He said, first of all, that I wouldn't have known about coveting if the law had not told me you shall not covet. That's a good thing that the law does. But then he moves on and he says that sin through that commandment produced in me all sorts of covetousness.

You see, for those of us who come into this world already fallen, already having a sinful nature, which is everyone after Adam, it's all of us.

We come into the world already fallen, already possessing a sinful nature, so that all that needs to happen is for a commandment to be presented to us.

And our natural reaction to that commandment is rebellion. That's our natural reaction. You can see it in every toddler. I don't know how many times over the last month I've said the word no, because we have a toddler in our home again.

[16 : 59] No, don't do that. Oh, she does it. No, don't do that. Oh, she does it again. Because that's our reaction to rules and regulations and commandments as fallen sinful people. And Paul says that sin, here personified, is aware of that.

Sin knows that. And so sin uses the law both to produce death in us and to make us even worse sinners by producing more sin in us. So that, he says, we would become sinful beyond measure.

Even greater sinners. So that we are presented here with a major problem. The law which is good, holy, and righteous is used by sin against sinful people, or in Paul's language, people who are in the flesh, to bring death upon us and to produce more sin in us.

That's how a good, holy, righteous law of God can be made to function in the service of sin. We are tempted at times to think that the law itself has something wrong with it, but the reality is, no, we have something wrong with us that sin exploits.

And so we cannot fix it by obeying more rules and commandments. We cannot fix our fundamental flaw by establishing more rules for us.

[18 : 22] There are many people who think that they can govern the Christian life simply by coming up with more and more rules and regulations. But that will not work. That will not work if we already know that the law has failed as a means of rescuing us and delivering us from our sinful tendencies.

The law has failed big time because the law has produced more sin in us. So we cannot fix our fundamental problem by appealing to the law.

And in fact, that was God's plan and purpose all along. God never gave the law assuming that His people would be able to obey the law and earn eternal life.

It is true that if you do manage to obey the law, God promises life. But He's well aware that no one can do that. So then why give a law if no one is capable of obeying it?

Hold your place in Romans 7. I want us to jump to Galatians real quickly because it answers that question that I think is a logical question for us to ask. It answers the question, then why would God give us a law if He knows we can't obey it and if He knows it's only going to produce death and more sin in us?

[19 : 38] Why would He give us a law and what is it about the law that prevents it from actually rescuing and delivering us? Galatians chapter 3, Paul asks a similar question to the one He's asking here.

Verse 21, Is the law contrary to the promises of God? That's a very similar question. Is the law contrary to the basic gospel message?

And His answer here is the same as we see in Romans 7. Certainly not. For if a law had been given that could give life, then righteousness would indeed be by the law.

So the problem is that the law does not have the ability to make spiritually dead people come alive. It cannot do it.

If you are in the position of Adam before the fall, then sure, the law can help you to maintain the life that you already have. But if you are born, as Paul says, dead in trespasses and sins, then the law cannot rescue you because the law can't give you spiritual life.

[20 : 43] It was never intended to do that. Paul says, if the law had been given that could give life, then righteousness would indeed be by the law, but it wasn't. Verse 22, here's why.

But the scripture imprisoned everything under sin so that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe. Why did God give us the law if the law can't save us?

Why did God give us the law if the law can't give us the life that we so desperately need? So that our prison would become stronger. So that we would be all the more bound up and tied up and destined for death.

So that when He rescues us by grace, through faith in Jesus, the glory will redound to Christ all the more. The purpose of all of this was simply so that He might save us through Christ and not through the law, through faith in Jesus.

And so the entire law of the Old Testament, all of it in its entirety, is aimed to point us towards Christ. Not to stir up within us more self-determination to try to do better and earn God's favor.

[21 : 58] The law doesn't do that. The law shows you like a mirror just how sinful you are. Do not covet. You wouldn't even know what it was if the law didn't show you.

But now you know not only what it is, but that you are in fact a coveter. That you are covetous in yourself. The law shows us who we really are so that we might run to Christ.

And that was the purpose of the law all along. But this leads to, I think, some more practical questions that I want to settle for us this morning before we move into the second half chapter 7 next week.

Because there are in our minds a lot of connections that aren't established. We need connections established that aren't settled in our minds.

That Paul in Romans 7 is not necessarily aiming to connect for us. He's not painting the broad picture here of everything we need to know about the law, which is why we have to jump to Galatians.

[23 : 01] It's why we have to move back to Genesis or Deuteronomy because Paul is assuming that his readers already know a whole lot about the law and the function of the law. He's assuming that.

He's writing to those who know the law who have some familiarity with it. And so we occasionally have to back up after we've made observations and ask some questions that will help us to make some of those connections in our mind.

Now, last week, for those of you who weren't here last week, I just encourage you to always go online when you're not here and listen to the sermon because they're all so connected and interwoven it's hard to follow sometimes if you're not here.

But last week, I told you that theologians, biblical scholars, will often divide the Old Testament law into three categories. All right? This is the kind of thing you want to write on your notes page there in your bulletin.

Three categories. And I told you that they were the ceremonial law, which includes the laws that pertain to the temple and the sacrificial system, as well as food laws, clothing laws, all those sorts of ceremonial laws that Israel had.

[24 : 06] And they are numerous in the Old Testament law. But then you also have what is often referred to by theologians as the civil law. Those are laws that governed Israel not as a religious entity but as a nation itself.

So there are laws pertaining to the kind of punishment that the elders of a city should mete out on someone who breaks part of God's law. There are laws governing things like divorce and remarriage.

There are laws governing things like slavery there in the Old Covenant. And we wonder at times why are these laws there? Because Israel lived in the midst of the real world.

And in the real world the civil government is forced at times to regulate behavior that is strictly and technically outside of God's ideal.

I'll give you an example. In Deuteronomy Moses gives commandments pertaining to divorce and remarriage. And when Jesus is asked about the commandment concerning divorce by the Pharisees and the scribes in the New Testament Jesus responds and says to them that Moses gave you those commands because of the hardness of your heart.

[25 : 17] In other words there are some laws contained within the law of Moses that God has given to Israel because they are a fallen and sinful people and under the Old Covenant God's people were not merely a religious group but they had a national identity.

They had a government. They had a king. They had elders in the city. And so the civil law was given to govern Israel as a nation while the ceremonial law was given to govern the religious life of the people of Israel.

We live under the New Covenant in which Jesus has fulfilled all of the ceremonial law all of the sacrificial system was aimed to point towards Christ and now that Christ has been sacrificed we are no longer under all of the ceremonial law.

And under the New Covenant God's people are not we're not a nation we're not a government in that sense. We are in fact merely a religious people.

We aren't we aren't nationalized so we don't fall under the civil law anymore. Now all of that is significant because you are going to have conversations in which non-Christians will throw the law in your face as a Christian.

[26 : 31] They will throw an obscure Old Testament law into your face in order to try to show that you're inconsistent in your application of God's word. This happens most frequently today I think with the issue of homosexuality where we will say well the scripture teaches against that and they will throw things like well the Bible also says you're not supposed to eat shellfish but you had shrimp the other day right?

Or the Bible says you're not supposed to wear cloth woven of two different fabrics and you've got a cotton polyester blend on right now so they will throw aspects of the law at us hoping to shake us and rattle us and point to a supposed inconsistency within Christianity but here's the reality those two aspects of the law ceremonial and civil do not apply to us who live after the coming of Christ when he has fulfilled both of those aspects of the law but there's a third portion of the law that we talked a bit about last week called the moral law the moral law includes exactly what you might think commands like do not kill commands like do not commit adultery or you shall not covet all of those moral commands primarily contained in the ten commandments as we see them there the moral law of God exists within the ceremonial and civil law but we can recognize it and see it as something distinct and different so that while we are no longer in any sense under the civil and ceremonial law we still are left with the question what do we do with the moral law and most of last week's sermon was aimed to help you to understand the answer to that question if we're not under the law what do we do with the moral law and my answer last week was our goal as Christians is not to check off all the boxes on each individual commandment our goal as Christians is to obey what's called the law of love or the law of Christ love the Lord your God with all your heart mind and soul and love your neighbor as yourself and if you obey the law of love then you will automatically obey the moral law and the only way that we can do that

Paul tells us in this chapter is through the power of the Holy Spirit transforming us and changing us but the moral law of God those commands themselves are still present and they still have a function for us and I said last week that the primary function of the moral law is to teach us what it looks like to love your neighbor and to love God if you don't have a teacher to show you what loving your neighbor looks like then you'll define almost anything as love and you'll justify any of your actions and you will say I'm being loving so I'm okay so the moral law comes in and gives us detail it gives us contours for what love really looks like in God's eye so we have the ceremonial law civil law and the moral law and while we are not technically under any of those the moral law still functions for the Christian as a teacher and a guide to show us how to love God and love our neighbor so much for the divisions of the law

I need to give you another threefold way of thinking about the law this morning and I've reviewed all of that so that you don't confuse these two things anytime I give you two lists of three it's easy to confuse them so we have the threefold what's called the division of the law alright that we talked about last week and I just reviewed but there is also something called the three uses of the law three ways in which the law is used by God and used by God's people and the first of those is that the law serves to define sin for us that's called the first use of the law by many theologians we've seen that here in our passage the law in fact does that the law defines sin for us look back in our passage one more time verse one I'm sorry verse seven I would not have known what it is to covet if the law had not said you shall not covet so in fact the law does show us what sin is as I said it's like a mirror showing us what sin is and who we are in light of that reality that's the first use of the law the third use of the law is what we've just been talking about and that's the moral law active in the life of a Christian and I have tweaked the way that theologians usually talk about that so that we're saying not simply we've got to obey the moral law we're saying that we have to obey the command of love and the moral law teaches us what love looks like but there is the one in the middle the second use of the law the second use of the law according to the traditional way of understanding is that the law serves the purpose of restraining sin that one of the purposes according to this threefold division is to hold sin back or to hold us back from committing all of the sins that we otherwise would commit if there were not a law in place acting as a wall or a boundary or a hedge around us and I want us to ask a question that I think matters for how we apply this passage is that true in light of what Paul says here about the law about sin using the law to produce more sin in us how can the law function to restrain sin if in fact

Paul says right here in Romans 7 that the law used the commandment to produce all sorts of covetousness within him how can the law be a restrainer in that sense and the answer is it's not at a most fundamental basic level the law does not serve the purpose of restraining you or anyone else around you that's not the most fundamental use of the law here the law in fact does the opposite and provokes sin but when the law is coupled with punishment as we saw there in Deuteronomy 28 God doesn't simply say obey my law he says obey my law or these curses will come upon you when the law is coupled with punishment it is through fear of punishment that the law can be used by God or by others to restrain sin that does nothing for the heart okay understand that does nothing for the heart of a person because their heart will still be fomenting with sin and sinful desires but practically it can through the use of punishment curb our outward displays of our inward desires so that in that sense the law coupled with punishment can in fact restrain sin now I'm saying all of this to you not to give you a bunch of information and send you out running

[33 : 35] I'm saying it to you so that we can think very carefully about how we go about proclaiming the gospel to other people around us how you can go about teaching the gospel to your little children as they grow up what is the role of the law in the raising of children or what is the role of the law in teaching the gospel to your co-workers or your family members does the law have anything to do with it at all well yes of course it does because if you can't show someone that they're sinful then you can never show them that they have need of a savior if you can't show your children that they need to be redeemed like everyone else then they'll they'll never understand their need for trusting in Jesus and we do that by means of the law but unless we are careful in our use of the law the law will only do what Paul says it does here in chapter 7 and that is in those whom we want to reach the law will only produce more sin so my first question in terms of application this morning is how can we make use of the law in our teaching of others in our evangelizing of others in such a way as to minimize the law's tendency to produce more sin and my answer to that is twofold if you're talking about your teaching other people or sharing the gospel with a stranger or a friend or a co-worker or someone like that a peer of some kind then there's not a whole lot that you can do to prevent the law from doing that there's not much that you can do because your goal is to help them to see and realize that they're helpless apart from the grace of Christ and when you come and present the law to them they're going to react against it how many times have you had a conversation with someone whose very lifestyle is steeped in sin and you share the gospel with them and tell them that these fundamental things about the way that you live your life are at odds with God's law and I want you to trust in Jesus so that you can avoid the penalty of hell for those sins please trust in the grace of Jesus please flee to Jesus and yet their response in light of you having called their lives sinful is both anger and a fresh determination to dive headlong back into that lifestyle there's nothing that you can do except be a faithful witness to the truth of God's word and pray that at some point the spirit of God will intervene and the law will cease to provoke sin and the law will chase them to Jesus so in reference to the world at large there's not a lot that you can do to prevent it but you can expect it you can be ready for it you can know that the law has this effect upon those who are outside of Christ so that you're not shocked by it so that you don't see their response to your attempt to evangelize them as somehow an indictment of you or your failure or their anger directed towards you that's not the case they're just fallen like you are they're just lost like all of us were at one time and that's the natural response of a lost person to God's law so be ready for that be prepared for that there's not a lot you can do to avoid it except to pray that eventually the spirit intervenes and then suddenly

God speaks life into their hearts and they trust in Jesus the law cannot give them that life but it can show them their need for life and the spirit can then begin to work through the power of the word now second point of application really is limited now more to those of us who are raising kids especially young kids as they grow up if the law provokes sin among those who do not yet personally know Christ should we withhold the law from our children to keep them from diving into more sin to keep from pushing them further into sin you could see how that might be a logical conclusion to reach I don't want to push my kid in that direction and so I don't want to be heavy on God's law and push them over there but if you give into that tendency you will never help your children to see their need of the gospel our goal as we disciple children is not to raise up good nice friendly smiling church members our goal is to help them to trust in Jesus by seeing that they as much as anyone else need to repent of their sin and turn to Christ alone for salvation that's what we want and you cannot do that without the law so what do you do as a parent well you refer to the second use of the law when the law is coupled with discipline and punishment the law can actually serve to build walls and hedges around those to whom it speaks so that as parents we don't just give a bunch of rules to our kids we give them some rules and we're clear on what will happen if they break these rules and then we understand that when those punishments come into place when law is coupled with punishment it can in fact create a wall and create a hedge but here's what we have to be aware of that wall and that hedge might prevent them from going headlong into sin it will not rescue them from hell it will not only the gospel will do that so this is just practical advice coming from me as a parent as a pastor who's counseled a lot of parents advice that I try and sometimes fail to follow myself but my advice in terms of law and children and the gospel is this don't give too many laws don't multiply rules in your home so that everywhere your child turns he or she is bound to break some kind of rule don't give them so many rules and be so overwhelming with the number of rules that there's nothing that they can do they're always punished they're always in trouble because they're just surrounded by rules and laws be simple the moral law is simple very simple honor your father and your mother don't steal things don't kill people

Jesus expands that to hurting people anger without cause don't commit adultery sexual purity is important don't covet don't be don't be a covetor the moral law is pretty simple and we can use the moral law coupled with threats of punishment if the moral law is broken in our family and in our home and it can be used to great effect both to create that hedge and to show them when they break it yes temporary punishment comes at home groundings spankings whatever works in your home temporary punishments temporal punishments will come in your home but every temporal punishment for a breaking of the law in your home is an opportunity once again to share the gospel and to tell them how to be set free from that cycle so that yes the law can provoke sin in your family it can provoke sin in your children but yes the law can be used to build walls no those walls will not save your kids and they're breaking and they're transgressing of those limits and boundaries are gospel opportunities unless you set up a legalistic system in which no matter what they do they are constantly under the thumb simple laws simple rules just as the moral law is simple and when it's broken be clear about the punishment and be clear about their need for the gospel to avoid real ultimate punishment someday the law can be used to great effect as you reach out to those in the world they will respond in a certain way and the law can be used to great effect in your home as you build walls and hedges and ultimately as you try to disciple and teach the gospel to your children the law is very helpful and I would say even necessary for those things but unless we understand the fundamental relationship between the law the flesh and sin we will stumble and fall and find ourselves confused and more importantly

I think we will miss all of the arrows pointing us toward the gospel every time we fail every time sin uses the law to produce sin in us is another opportunity to cherish the gospel to cherish the reality that we are in fact not made right with God by our ability to control all of those urges or by our ability to obey all of those rules we are in fact declared righteous by God because Christ has obeyed in our place because Christ has done what we cannot do and if we will lean on Him and trust in Him alone for our salvation a miracle will happen not only do we get justified by God not only do we get the reward of eternity in heaven with Christ but the Spirit comes inside of us now and will change the way that we interact with the law of God but all of that all of that happens by trusting in Jesus and so I urge you if you are still under the law if you are still trying to figure out why you can't just get it right if you are still thinking you need to do this and that and you need to cover these bases in order to be right with God

I urge you stop doing those things and trust in Christ let's pray again again