

Jesus and the Moral Law Today

The Ten Commandments

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These are, in my opinion, exhilarating days to be a Christian and to be a pastor as governments in different places have tried to start to dictate to the Christian church what it will be, when it will meet, and what it shall teach. Over the past couple of years we've seen governments in different places try to dictate the terms of worship under the guise of public health and now, as we saw on Sunday and discussed briefly, as we see in Canada, the government there is trying to prohibit biblical teaching on sexuality and morality. Their legislature is on record without opposition, without a single dissenting voice, as calling the biblical view of morality a myth.

What does that mean for us and how we look to the future? A soldier's valor is tested in times of battle, not in times of peace, and we must obey God rather than men and not be intimidated into silence, not be intimidated into changing teaching or softening teaching or whispering where God has spoken clearly. This is a time for us to stand forth and to stand and be counted and there is no doubt that the matter of sexual morality is going to be the litmus test by which you can measure churches and pastors going forward. Are they clear and unambiguous on the biblical teaching that homosexuality is a sin, and that transgenderism is not to be tolerated or affirmed? Or do they soft-pedal that, do they silence that, and do they start to say, "Well, you know what? It's difficult and it's hard to get to the bottom of these things." Scripture is not unclear on these things and so it's going to be a very clear litmus test going forward as people have the opportunity to ask a church, to ask a pastor, "Tell me what your teaching is on biblical sexual morality. Point me to messages that you have taught. Point me to books that you recommend or that you have written on the matter so that I can see clearly where you stand." Churches that want to be friends with the world cannot survive in this environment. They will capitulate and turn to liberalism in order to maintain their friendship with the world.

Back on September 8, 2021, which I guess was just last September, I said this on social media and it's admittedly weird and awkward to quote myself but I just ran across it late in the afternoon and I wanted to include it so how else can I introduce it? I said, "If the government can tell you how and when to worship, it can tell you what to teach. If the church lets the government dictate the terms of worship, it will let it dictate doctrine also. Many may not see that yet but it is inevitable. Some things are more important than life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. Christ is the head of the church with all authority given to him. Our obligation of loyalty and obedience is supremely to Christ. Friends, if

we are not clear on Lordship and authority, we won't get anything else right. Jesus is Lord, not Caesar. That must guide us in the future battles that are sure to come."

So on Sunday, this past Sunday we started a message in support of Canadian pastors and the approach that we took was to go to the 10 Commandments, where we have already been studying, and to bring forth the fact that the moral law of God expressed in the 10 Commandments is universal both across time and to all people. The moral law of God applies to all people everywhere, it applies to unbelievers and believers alike in different ways, as we tried to make clear on Sunday, and tonight I want to finish what we started. To talk about the moral law, you go to the Old Testament and you look at what Moses said and what Moses reported from the Lord in Exodus 20, among other places, and then you carry it through also and see what the New Testament says in the teaching of Jesus and in the teaching of the apostles.

So what I want to do just to, again, set the tone and to impress upon us the central significance of the moral law, I want to read the 10 Commandments again from Exodus 20 and I invite you to turn there with me. Exodus 20. We've been teaching about the 10 Commandments since May, it's now January. I didn't intend that to become a 30 part series when I started but that is what is necessary to lay forth the 10 Commandments and to help us see something very important. The reason that we've taken so much time on it is that the 10 Commandments go very deep, they are very broad and they are very deep in their significance, in their application, and each commandment is deeply convicting to each one of us when its implications are properly understood and properly taught. So you can't rush through that. We can't just go through and do a very quick series on the 10 Commandments just to say that we did it. If that's our approach, we might as well not teach on it at all; there's nothing useful or helpful about that, in my opinion.

So we're taking the time to go through them and this coming Sunday I hope to start on the sixth commandment and we will go from there, but for tonight, Exodus 20. As we did on Sunday, I ask you to stand as we read God's law. Exodus 20. If you're able to stand, if it's not comfortable for you to stand, that's okay. But Exodus 20, we stand in reverence to the word of God, beginning in verse 1.

1 Then God spoke all these words, saying, 2 "I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. 3 You shall have no other gods before Me. 4 You shall not make for yourself an idol, or any likeness of what is in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the water under the earth. 5 You shall not worship them or serve them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children, on the third and the fourth generations of those who hate Me, 6 but showing lovingkindness to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments. 7 You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain, for the LORD will not leave him unpunished who takes His name in vain. 8 Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. 9 Six days you shall labor and do all your work, 10 but the seventh day is a sabbath of the LORD your God; in it you

shall not do any work, you or your son or your daughter, your male or your female servant or your cattle or your sojourner who stays with you. 11 For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day; therefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day and made it holy. 12 Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be prolonged in the land which the LORD your God gives you. 13 You shall not murder. 14 You shall not commit adultery. 15 You shall not steal. 16 You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor. 17 You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife or his male servant or his female servant or his ox or his donkey or anything that belongs to your neighbor."

Thank you, you may be seated.

As we said on Sunday, that one text properly understood convicts all men of all time of their guilt before God. Romans 3 makes this clear that the law of God makes all of the world accountable before God and causes us all to fall silent before him. There is no protest that we can make in our own defense. There is no objection that we can make to the righteousness of God's law. And there is no defense of the conviction that the law of God brings, there is no defense that we can make to the charges that the law of God convicts us of not only collectively as a unit but on each individual commandment. Every one of us has broken every one of these commandments multiple multiple times in a way that brings great guilt upon our souls. This is what we see as we study these commandments in depth and every one a single command of these 10, one of them is sufficient to convict us, all 10 of them convict us, and so we can't even begin to calculate the enormity of our guilt before a holy God.

So that moral law, which we just read, brings the knowledge of sin to our mind and to our hearts and to our understanding and that's greatly significant. And one of the things that you can see is that the failure to teach God's moral law has a devastating impact on the proclamation of the gospel, and it has a devastating impact on society in general. In society in general when the law is not upheld, then justice is not served and the restraining force of the law, the restraining force of the threatenings of the law is lost and people are free to practice greater and greater lawlessness and society breaks down when the law of God is ignored. You see that taught clearly in the first chapter of the prophet Habakkuk, for example, and you certainly see it in the day in which we live as we look around and we see liberal prosecutors saying that they're going to eliminate punishment for certain crimes and not prosecute other crimes. What does this do but invite lawlessness and sin and rebellion from hearts that are more than ready to go when they have the sense that they can sin and commit crime without any kind of consequence for it. The social consequences of this are very far-reaching and what I'm trying to say in so many words, is that when the law of God loses its place in a society, that's the inevitable result that's going to take place.

And one of the horrible failures of the Christian church is that it has neglected the law of God for the sake of entertainment, for the sake of felt needs, for the sake of so-called

seeker sensitivity, because these marketers who stand in pulpits understand that the law of God will not attract people to hear. But to neglect it for the sake of building an audience supposedly in the name of Christ, is not commendable, it's a treasonous failure to fulfill the responsibility that we have to teach the whole counsel of God. This is a matter of great momentous consequence and if the church won't teach the law of God, who will? Where will men hear of the absolute standard of God, the moral law of God, if the church is not teaching it? Where are they going to hear that? And then take it a step further and understand the ramifications of that. If people are not convicted of sin and the law is what convicts people of sin, when and where are they ever going to think that the gospel of Jesus Christ matters to them? What is the point of a gospel that offers forgiveness of your sin if you have no standard by which you are being convicted of sin? If you're being told that God wants you to have your best life now, that God loves you and has a wonderful plan for your life, and that's all that you ever hear without the convicting work of the law of God, what is going to happen except people are going to develop hard hearts against biblical truth, an attitude of indifference to the gospel because the gospel is irrelevant to people who do not think they are guilty before a holy God. Oh, they might want Jesus as a friend and want different aspects of promises of Christ, of promises of God for a good and happy life here on earth, you know, your best life now and all that kind of nonsense but, beloved, that is not the gospel according to Jesus. That is not the gospel according to the apostles. The gospel of Matthew records in Matthew 4, it's the opening statement of Jesus' ministry, Matthew 4:17, Matthew gives a summary statement of the teaching of Jesus when he quotes him as saying, "Repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." Repentance means nothing to people who think they have nothing of which to repent.

So the law of God is so central for us to understand, to teach, and to plow the ground in human hearts. Preachers are under no obligation or no responsibility to explain why they teach on the things that they do. Martyn Lloyd-Jones certainly made that clear in his book, "Preaching and Preachers." We're under no obligation to explain the motives by which we choose certain passages or books to teach on in any given time to time, but I'll be upfront with you that this series on the 10 Commandments I am preaching for the sake of the people that associate and look to Truth Community Church for teaching because I want to plow the ground in hearts which the law of God so that there would be an opportunity afterwards to come and plant the seeds of the gospel, that those who have been convicted by the law of God would come under conviction, look for relief, and in teaching that comes later after the 10 Commandments, that we would be able to step in with even more gospel-centered teaching that people are prepared to receive and understand the urgency of which is being taught. So there's a long-term over the course of months and even years approach that we're trying to adopt here, understanding and believing that the law of God prepares the way for the gospel, and that's why we're doing what we're doing but we must take our time and deal with it appropriately, and so that's what we're trying to do. The Lord will be the final judge of whether we have done well or not.

So with all of that said, we come to this point, is that no government, not the United States Supreme Court in the Obergefell decision, and I saw, I think it was today, maybe

yesterday, that the plaintiff, Obergefell, is now planning to run for Congress and to build on his notoriety for a shot at political office. Boy, what times we live in. Like I said at the start, this is an exhilarating time to be in ministry, to be able to stand for Christ and to stand for the word of God against such lawlessness in these things. But what I'm trying to say is that no government, not the Supreme Court in the United States, not the Canadian Parliament, not any place else, no government can legislate God's moral law out of existence, and unfaithful pastors cannot make it go away by ignoring it and refusing to teach on it for the sake of other things that they think will be more palatable to the ears of their hearers. No government can legislate God's moral law out of existence. It is absolute. It is universal. It is in effect at all times. Furthermore, no government can righteously regulate the doctrine and practice of the church of Jesus Christ.

Beloved, what we're talking about here this evening, what we're talking about in this brief series here, I want you to understand this is a hill to die on. This is ground that we cannot abdicate. There is no retreat from these principles. There is no retreat from this. If this is where the Lord has brought the battle, it is incumbent upon us to be faithful and engage the battle and to trust the Lord to bless us as we do, to protect and guard us, and if we lose liberty, if we lose life in the process, listen, faithfulness to Christ is worth more than all of those things put together.

So we come to a more narrow question for this evening, having established the universal applicability of the law, we need to address the matter within the church now and ask the question, ask and answer the question: does the moral law apply to Christians today? Are we responsible to obey the moral law today? And the answer to that question simply put is: yes, we are. Yes, we are under obligation. The moral law has authority over us. Now we've been very clear and we've said many many times to understand exactly what we mean when we say that. We do not obey the moral law in order to earn salvation. We do not obey the moral law in order to contribute to the merit by which we would obtain eternal life. Jesus Christ and Jesus Christ alone is our merit. Jesus Christ and Jesus Christ alone is our righteousness and we receive his righteousness by faith, and that righteousness fulfills all the demands of the law of God on our behalf. Further, when we receive the person of Christ, we also receive the benefit of his shed blood which pays the price for all of our violations of the law of God.

So Christ had a positive and, you could say, a negative impact on us; there's a positive righteousness and a cleansing impact of Christ that is credited to our account. His righteousness counts as the obedience to the law which God requires from us. His shed blood is that which cleanses us from all of our transgressions and removes the curse of God from our souls. So we don't obey the moral law to achieve any of those things, we have been saved from the condemnation of the law of God and we rejoice in that. We're not under the burden of obedience in order to earn our salvation. I don't know how to make that any more clear. Having said that, having said that the law does not apply to Christians for the purpose of earning salvation, the law does not apply to condemn us because Christ took the condemnation for us, the fact that the law does not apply to us in those ways does not mean that there isn't other use of the law that we need to be aware of and to take into account. The law applies to us with a different purpose in the fact that it

shows us the will of God. It shows us and instructs us in what God wants from us in order that we might please him as believers. It shows and exposes our sin so that we could confess it and repent of it and be cleansed from it. And it also has a restraining impact on us in the remnants of sin on our heart when we see the law of God and it says, "Do this. Don't do that." It restrains us from a proper healthy fear of God that we would not displease him by transgressing against his law. So it instructs us and shows us how we are to obey God as we are pursuing our sanctification. It shows us what acceptable worship to God is, it shows us what acceptable love to God and love to man is and we respond to that and we obey that not to earn anything but because this is the will of God for his children, and as we learn from it, it shows us with increasing clarity our need for Christ.

Now how do we know – this is the question for tonight, it's actually a very narrow question that we're answering this evening – how do we know that the moral law applies to us as believers like that? Well, we're going to look at three things, one is a very brief review of Sunday, and then two other things. You see it from the teaching of the Old Testament, you see it from the teaching of Jesus, and you see it from the teaching of the apostles. As I said on Sunday, there's a thread of this from Genesis all the way to Revelation.

So let's just remember briefly what we said about the teaching of the Old Testament on Sunday. As we saw on Sunday, this is point number 1: the teaching of the Old Testament. I encourage you to take notes because this is important. The 10 Commandments were not a new moral code when God gave them to Moses to teach to Israel, rather they simply clarified the morality that God had written previously on Adam's heart. We saw multiple examples from the book of Genesis indicating that there was an understanding, a fundamental understanding of the moral law even among the patriarchs and among the people that they interacted with before Moses was ever on the scene. Then we saw in the book of Leviticus 18, which I just find utterly compelling on this point, that God judged the nations for their violations of the law that he was describing in Leviticus, he judged them for violating them before that had been given to Moses.

So the moral law applied to Moses, it applied to the patriarchs, it applied to other nations before the 10 Commandments were ever given by God. So there's obviously a universal import to them when the people prior to the 10 Commandments received them, and the giving of the 10 Commandments obviously was not intended to restrict and to eliminate the application to all men, it was simply that God gave the law to Israel and Moses and gave it to them in a way that it would have universal application, and given to them in the context of them becoming the covenant people of God. But that does not mean that it didn't apply to those outside of the covenant, it did as shown by those factors that we have considered.

So the law, the moral law, did not start in Exodus 20, it merely put into writing, it merely codified what the understanding had been beforehand. Now there's a similar dynamic that goes on with the gospels, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John in the New Testament. There was a lot of oral teaching about Christ that was going on prior to the time that the gospels

were written, and those four gospel writers independent of one another, contrary to the theory of Marcan priority, those four gospel writers took the oral tradition, talked with people and took that oral tradition and reduced it to writing. It was true in its oral form and then God, through the work of the Holy Spirit, put it into writing and so there's a loose comparison there that there is this awareness of God's law, there was this awareness of the teaching of Christ that was subsequently put down into writing, and this is what we see from the New Testament and from the Old Testament.

So that's just a brief review of what we saw on Sunday. I know we buzzed through it very quickly and I can only point you to the audio of that for your review if you were not with us two days ago. So that said, let's move quickly, number 2, to the teaching of Jesus Christ. The teaching of Jesus Christ and when Matt opened the service, he did not know that I was going to go to the same text that he read from, but in Jesus' teaching we see him emphasizing the enduring authority of the moral law.

So turn back to Matthew 5 with me, Matthew 5, beginning in verse 17, put your finger there, but go over to chapter 4, verse 17, to see that verse that I alluded to a few moments ago. "From that time Jesus began to preach and say, 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.' So Jesus is preaching the gospel and preaching the kingdom of heaven and then it flows into the extended discourse which we know as the Sermon on the Mount. You know that they are linked by the verbal connection when you see in Matthew 5:3 where Jesus says, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." In verse 10 he says, "Blessed are those who have been persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." And then in verse 20 of chapter 5, "For I say to you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven." So Jesus speaks and opens up with a gospel call to repent because the kingdom of heaven is at hand, and then he goes into the Sermon on the Mount emphasizing the kingdom of heaven so that the nature of repentance, the nature of repentance and saving faith is found to be the entrance point for the kingdom of heaven.

Now in that broader context, what does Jesus say about the law of God is the question, and in Matthew 5:17, he says this, "Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish but to fulfill." The coming of Christ and coming to Christ by faith does not abolish the law and make it of no authority amongst those who believe, who become disciples of Christ, that is not the point and that is not the teaching at all. It's authority in our moral lives continues even though Christ has fulfilled the ceremonial aspects of the law, he has fulfilled the righteousness that the law requires, and he has fulfilled the punishment that it requires. That doesn't cancel the other purpose of the law to instruct us in the way that we are to please God so that in verse 18 Jesus says, "For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass from the Law until all is accomplished."

Now listen, in the Sermon on the Mount Jesus is specifically instructing his disciples on the nature of true repentance. He is explaining to them what the fruit of true repentance looks like and in that context he says, "Don't think that the law has been abolished. Don't

think that even the smallest letter or stroke can pass away until everything is accomplished." He's teaching us the enduring authority of the moral law and to clench this and to just make this abundantly clear to us, you continue reading on in Matthew 5 and you see how he uses the law to teach and to instruct us so that in verse 21, he cites the sixth commandment. He says, "You have heard that the ancients were told, 'You shall not commit murder' and 'Whoever commits murder shall be liable to the court.'" Quoting from Exodus 20:13, "You shall not murder." Jesus quotes the sixth commandment just after he had said that the law is not being abolished by his coming. And he goes on to say in verse 22 as he addresses his disciples, he says, "I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother shall be guilty before the court; and whoever says to his brother, 'You good-for-nothing,' shall be guilty before the supreme court; and whoever says, 'You fool,' shall be guilty enough to go into the fiery hell."

Now I love the providence of God in the course of carrying on a long-term pulpit. It's in the providence of God we're going to be looking at the sixth commandment this Sunday and the following Sunday, and so we're going to have opportunity to go through these things again so we'll just go with some summary statements right now. What I want you to observe for now is the fact that Jesus – this is what's so important – Jesus cites from the 10 Commandments as he teaches his disciples about the morality and the obedience and the righteousness that God requires from them. He points to the 10 Commandments as binding moral authority for his disciples. That's the point. That shows us that the moral law has application and has binding authority on Christians today.

Now you keep reading and you find Jesus quoting the seventh commandment in verse 27 where he says, "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall not commit adultery'; but I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart." And there's so much to be said about that, that will be coming, you know, within the next month, Lord willing, as we continue through our series on the 10 Commandments. All that you need to see for tonight is that Jesus cites the 10 Commandments twice as binding moral authority for his disciples, and he cites it and then he clarifies the ultimate meaning of the law and rescues it from the false interpretations that had been applied by the Pharisaical teachers of that day, Jesus brings the law back and tells people and helps them understand that the law has a heart application. It's not simply that murder is sinful and a violation of the sixth commandment, hatred in the heart, which is the motive for murder, itself is a violation whether anybody's blood is shed or not. And in like manner, the seventh commandment can be violated without ever touching a member of the opposite sex. It can be violated by what is going on in your heart, Jesus says, and he derives that from the teaching on the 10 Commandments showing that the 10 Commandments have binding moral authority over us. We are not free to disregard them. Grace does not mean that you have license to disregard or violate any of the 10 Commandments. The purpose of grace is to equip your heart to change it and to give you power so that you can now live in glad obedience to the law of God and to say with David, "Your law is my delight." It's amazing that this point has to be made but after the carnage that Dallas Seminary has wreaked on so many people's thinking, it is necessary to emphasize this.

Go on to Matthew 22, and we've pointed to this multiple times, but the law is instructing us in more than obedience and more than morality. It's doing that but it's doing more as well and in Matthew 22:36, let's start in verse 34, "when the Pharisees heard that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered themselves together. One of them, a lawyer, asked Him a question, testing Him, 'Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?' And He said to him, 'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.' This is the great and foremost commandment. The second is like it, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets." What he's saying there is that loving God and loving your neighbor is a summary form of everything that the law is trying to inculcate into the people of God. In the first table of the law, the first four commandments of the 10 Commandments you have that vertical dimension of the Godward dimension of the 10 Commandments, and the point of that, Jesus says, is to teach us how to love God. The goal of the law in the first table is to teach us how to love God and to call us to do so. In like manner, the second table starting with, "Honor your father and your mother," ending with, "You shall not covet," those six commandments 5-10, are designed to teach us how to love our neighbor.

So it is not at all a proper understanding of the law to think of it as some kind of external ceremonial conformity to it. It is not a proper understanding of the law to think about it as something by which you earn your salvation. It is not something that we satisfy by grinding out with an unwilling spirit, the best external obedience that we can give to it. No, no, no, no, no. No, the law of God is teaching us how to love God and how to love our neighbor. We understand the law properly when we understand that it is instructing us on how to love God so that, for example, when the 10 Commandments say, "You shall have no other gods before Me," it's teaching us that we love God by loving him exclusively, that we love him with our highest affection and we allow no competitors in our heart to rival him for our affections. We love Christ preeminently. We love him first and foremost. We love him as Lord. And we understand that all of our earthly loves, our earthly family, our spouse, our children, you know, whatever other earthly human love we have, all of that is subordinate to the Lord Jesus Christ. And we love him preeminently. If you don't love him first and foremost and above all, you don't love him at all, you don't belong to him.

You say, "I think you've gone too far there. I think you've overstated your case, counselor." Well, let's go back to Matthew 10 and see this is another setting. You see, the gospel is not simply calling upon you to believe a set of facts about Jesus and what he did. It's far more than that. It's far more than just saying, "Oh, I believe Jesus died for my sins." That is part of it but the call of the gospel is so much more than that. It's more than a call to simply believe certain facts that you are told about Jesus Christ. The gospel is preeminently a call for you to forsake yourself, to forsake the world, to repent of sin and to embrace Jesus Christ with all of your heart, to love him supremely, to love him to the utmost, and to bring to him a submission that says, "I will respond to You as my Lord and Master and King and I will love You for it." You're responding to the person of Christ, not merely acquiescing to some historical facts. It is the person of Christ that is at the center of the gospel and the first commandment says, "You shall have no other gods

before Me," and in the spirit of that, Jesus says in Matthew 10:37, he could not be more explicit about this. He says, "He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me; and he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me. He who has found his life will lose it, and he who has lost his life for My sake will find it."

So, you know, this is probably a pretty good time for us to step back and just ask you and in accordance with the Scripture that calls us to examine ourselves: is Christ superlative and supreme in your life like that or have you just been content with the outward aspects of Christianity, content with a nominal confession of Christ and, you know, maybe you were baptized when you were little or whatever? What is the dominant force, the dominant love in your life? What is supreme to you? Christ says, "It must be Me or you do not belong to Me." And do you know what? Christ is the sovereign Son of God, he gets to set whatever terms he wants, and he said, "I did not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance." He said, "Come to Me, you who labor and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest." You must come to him, not just to facts about him that you agree with mentally that don't affect your affections, that don't move your heart, that don't change your disposition. No, it's the person of Christ himself.

So even as Christians we are subject to the moral authority of the law that teaches us how to love God and man and we must obey, not to earn our salvation but out of a glad obligation of love. We must obey because the thought of disobedience to such a gracious Lord and Master who gave himself on the cross for our sins, the thought of doing anything other than giving him our complete allegiance is abhorrent to us. So you see this, Jesus himself said, "He who has My commandments and keeps them is the one who loves Me," John 14:21. And the Apostle John said, "By this we know that we've come to know Him, if we keep His commandments," 1 John 2:3. "This is love, that we walk according to His commandments," 2 John, verse 6. The commandments teaching us to obey God and that obedience being the fruit of a genuine love for God so that, so that a proper understanding of the 10 Commandments not only convicts us, as we've said, on the individual commandments themselves, each one convicts every one of us thoroughly and completely of our guilt before God, the 10 Commandments convict us as a unit, but then the convicting power, you see, goes even further because they open us up to a window of understanding that what they're teaching us ultimately is to love God and to love our neighbor and we fail on that account as well. Don't you see how desperately you and I need a Savior? How desperately we need the Lord Jesus Christ? Because at every point of the law we are convicted as falling short, and the moral law carries its authority forward to us.

So as believers when we hear this instruction from God's word and it convicts us, as it's been convicting me and I hope that it's been convicting all of you, if not many of you in a similar way, it humbles us. This utterly divests us of any claim to personal righteousness. This shows us how much we are humbled before a holy God and it makes us look outside of ourselves for reconciliation, outside of ourselves for forgiveness, outside of ourselves for righteousness, this makes us despair of our own righteousness, declares spiritual bankruptcy, and then come to Christ and just say, "Christ, have mercy on me, the sinner."

Be merciful to me. I have broken Your law. My heart grieves over it. I pray that You would forgive me and cleanse me and wash me, and help me by Your Holy Spirit to walk in greater conformity with what You require going forward." And finding in Christ, finding in that kind of confession our peace and our comfort rather than having a sense of self-satisfaction that, "I haven't done so bad. You know, when I compare myself to other people, I'm better than they are." That's not the comparison. The comparison is never Hitler. The comparison is never Mussolini or Stalin or any other infamous character from history of great evil. That's not the standard. The standard is the holy law of God and it convicts us all.

So we have to get the standard right before we can possibly begin to understand our position vertically before a holy God. That ought to be clear and obvious to everybody that hears, and that's why the law can be our tutor to lead us to Christ. It instills in us a sense of urgency that says, "This can't be about my righteousness and so I've got to find it someplace else." And when you see it's not just your conduct, it's what you say as well, it's your heart motives, your heart attitudes, this great moral law of God stands over us all. We can see that also in point number 3 in the teaching of the apostles, to see this application to us.

Let's go to the teaching of the apostles, point 3, and you see the Apostle Paul affirming and being the basis of the things that we have said in Romans 10, for example, where the apostles rebukes the Jews who were using the law to try to earn salvation. In Romans 10:1 through 4 he says, "Brethren, my heart's desire and my prayer to God for them is for their salvation. For I testify about them that they have a zeal for God, but not in accordance with knowledge. For not knowing about God's righteousness and seeking to establish their own, they did not subject themselves to the righteousness of God. For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes." That can also be understood that Christ is the goal of the law for righteousness. In other words, what the law does is it teaches us to look to Christ so that he can be our righteousness, but that does not excuse us and cause us to be able to live in any kind of licensed sinful way that we want to. Paul made that plain earlier in Romans 6:1 when he said, "What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin so that grace may increase?" And he says, "May it never be!" God forbid. "Shall we sin," verse 15, "because we are not under law but under grace?" The idea being that we're not under law in order to earn our justification.

So the law convicts us of sin and points us to Christ as the remedy. Christ kept the law for us. The law no longer threatens to punish us. Romans 8:1, "there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus." Look at Galatians 3:11. We're building up to a point here that I know you're dying to hear me explain. The penalty of the law fulfilled in Christ. Galatians 3:11, "Now that no one is justified by the Law," that is, declared righteous by the law, "no one is justified by the Law before God is evident; for, 'The righteous man shall live by faith.' However, the Law is not of faith; on the contrary, 'He who practices them shall live by them.' Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us for it is written, 'Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree' in order that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we would receive the promise of the Spirit through faith." So Christ paid the penalty of the

law, we're justified by faith in Christ, he is our righteousness, our sanctification, our wisdom and all of those things.

Now with all of that said, understand that the same apostle that wrote those things used the moral law with authority to the church to teach us about the nature of love. Look at Romans 13 beginning in verse 8. This is why reading all of the Scripture is so critical and not simply latching onto one or two favorite verses and trying to build your entire theology out of isolated passages. You need the whole Bible to inform all of your theology so that in Romans 13:8, look what the same apostle who said those things that we just read, look what he says in verse 8, "Owe nothing to anyone except to love one another; for he who loves his neighbor has fulfilled the law. For this," then he cites multiple commandments from the second table of the law, "For this, 'You shall not commit adultery, you shall not murder, you shall not steal, you shall not covet,' and if there is any other commandment, it is summed up in this saying, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself,'" making the same point that Jesus did in Matthew 22 in a briefer way. Verse 10, "Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfillment of the law."

One other passage I want you to see before I wrap this up and summarize it. In James 2 just after the book of Hebrews, James 2:8, you see how law and love are so closely connected in the apostolic mind. Verse 8, James 2, "If, however, you are fulfilling the royal law according to the Scripture, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself,' you are doing well. But if you show partiality, you are committing sin and are convicted by the law as transgressors." Notice the law is applying to convict them as transgressors. "For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles in one point, he has become guilty of all. For He who said, 'Do not commit adultery,' also said, 'Do not commit murder.' Now if you do not commit adultery, but do commit murder, you have become a transgressor of the law. So speak and so act as those who are to be judged by the law of liberty. For judgment will be merciless to one who has shown no mercy; mercy triumphs over judgment."

Here's the point of all of that: the apostles cite the 10 Commandments as they write to the church and they cite the 10 Commandments as current, binding authority on their readers, which by extension goes to believers today. The moral law does not oppose the principle of love, the moral law shows us what we must do in order to love. The moral law does not save us but it does instruct us, and we are accountable to God for our response to his law which Jesus says he did not come to abolish but to fulfill, the law that Jesus said not the smallest stroke or letter from the law will pass until all things are accomplished.

So to pull all of this together Sunday and tonight together, the law condemns sexual immorality in the church and in the nations. It convicts the common man and it convicts the Prime Minister and the Supreme Court justice alike of sin and guilt and judgment before God. It condemns us all and so what must we do in these exhilarating days of faithfulness? What does faithfulness to Christ look like for us collectively as a church? We must warn governments, when I say the church, I mean that in the broad universal sense of all believers, we must warn governments when they cross their boundaries and

refuse to comply when they do, and we must warn individuals in our circle of influence of family and love and work and neighborhood as God gives us opportunity, we must warn individuals of guilt and judgment. And when we've done that, then we go further and we tell them that Jesus Christ made a blood atonement for sinners just like them, just like you, at the cross, and in that we join faithful Christians across the centuries, tracing back the message to the Apostle Paul in Acts 17, listen to me as I read it, you don't need to turn there, that, "Therefore having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now declaring to men that all people everywhere should repent, because He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead."

Let's pray together.

Holy and gracious Father, we ask You to have mercy on sinners in our day. We pray that You would send Your Holy Spirit with power upon the proclamation of the gospel in faithful pulpits throughout our land and throughout the globe. We pray, Father, that by Your sovereign majesty and Your sovereign hand, that You would restrain and overturn wicked governments who have taken it upon themselves to call Your truth a myth and to give license to people to sin against Your moral law. Father, how great the judgment must be, how great the guilt must be. We pray that You would send Your Spirit with a restraining and overturning impact upon the wickedness that is all around us. On a personal level, on a private level, Father, we pray that You would convict men and women, boys and girls, including some in this room, deeply of their sin against You that they might repent and turn to the Lord Jesus Christ by faith alone for the salvation, deliverance and forgiveness that they so desperately need. May the Spirit open ears and open hearts even as we speak now. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

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