

The Law as a Rule of Life and a Revealer of Sin

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[0:00] So, last time we considered what it means for Christians to be free from the law, specifically! as a covenant of works. You may remember that in Romans 7, Paul explained that believers have died! through the body of Christ. In other words, Christ has delivered us from the law's condemnation, but that doesn't mean he provided us freedom to live however we want.

In fact, Paul says he released us from the law so that we might belong to him and bear fruit for God. And this is accomplished through the enabling work of the Spirit. So, while Christ accomplished our redemption through his finished work on the cross, the Spirit then applies its benefits through regeneration and sanctification, changing us to make us a people, as Ezekiel said, who walk in the Lord's statutes and are careful to obey his rules. So, the Christian's relationship to the law has fundamentally changed, but God's standard of righteousness has not. The law remains the same as well. The law is the same. The law is the same. The law is the same. The law is the same. The law is to keep the law. Well, today we will build on that foundation. If the Christian is no longer under the law as a covenant of works, meaning that we are not in a position where the law will either justify us or condemn us, how do we use the law?

We've established that God's law. We've established that God's moral law remains authoritative, but what exactly does that mean for us? Well, let me read the next portion of the paragraph in this chapter of the Confession. It says, Yet, the moral law is very useful to them, that is, true believers, and to others as a rule of life that informs them of the will of God and their duty.

It directs and obligates them to live according to its precepts. It also exposes the sinful corruptions of their natures, hearts, and lives.

As they examine themselves in light of the law, they come to further conviction of humiliation for and hatred of sin, along with a clearer view of their need for Christ and the perfection of his obedience.

[2:39] Now, that's not the full paragraph, but that's as far as we'll get today. So, as you can see, the confession moves from what the law cannot do for believers to what it can do.

It cannot justify or condemn us, but it does remain useful. Namely, it teaches us how to live, it exposes the sin that remains within us, and it leads us to a deeper appreciation for Christ.

And I'd like to begin by looking at Psalm 19. We looked at this briefly earlier in our study of the law, but there's a particular aspect of it I want us to consider today.

So, Psalm 19 has basically three movements. First, we see in verses 1-6, David celebrates God's revelation in creation.

And then in verses 7-11, he praises God's revelation through his word. And then in verses 12-14, he basically responds personally to what God has revealed.

[3:51] So, starting at verse 7, he writes, The law of the Lord is perfect, reviving the soul. The testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple.

The precepts of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart. The commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes. The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring forever.

The rules of the Lord are true and righteous altogether. So, David uses several different descriptions of the Lord's revelation through his word.

And in context, he's speaking broadly about God's revelation to Israel. But that would include his moral commandments, of course. But I want to pay particular attention to what David says this revelation accomplishes.

He says it revives the soul. It makes wise the simple. It rejoices the heart. It enlightens the eyes.

[4:51] And what you'll notice in all of these things is that David is not merely admiring God's law or God's word. He certainly is. But he's actually highlighting its usefulness, its practicality.

God has given us his word so that we might know him. And that we might learn how to live before him. So, it has a very practical function. Consider the end of verse 7.

The testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple. When David speaks of the simple, he's describing someone who lacks wisdom. Someone who lacks discernment.

This person may be intelligent. They may be educated. They may be quite experienced in many areas of life. Yet, they remain easily misled about what is right and what is good.

God's word provides him the wisdom he lacks. It teaches him to distinguish righteousness from sin and to recognize the path that he ought to follow. We see the same idea in verse 8.

[5:57] The precepts of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart. The commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes. Through God's word, we see the proper course of our lives.

It gives us light to see that course more clearly. And this is really an important way to think about the moral law in particular. It's not merely a list of prohibitions.

It is God's authoritative instruction concerning how we ought to live. Think about how often we face decisions that require moral judgments.

Sometimes the right thing to do may be obvious to us. We know we must not steal or lie or commit adultery. But there are other situations that require a lot more careful thought, right?

How should I respond when someone treats me unfairly? What should I do when telling the truth will cost me dearly? What does faithfulness require in my marriage?

[7:01] Now, there are a number of ways we could attempt to answer these questions. For instance, we could appeal to our feelings. What feels right? We might consider what other people would do.

We might simply ask what seems reasonable in the moment. But none of these things provide an infallible standard for Christian conduct.

What we really need to know is what God says and what God requires. And there's something that may seem obvious, but we need to recognize this about ourselves.

We are capable of being sincerely wrong. And what I mean is a person can genuinely believe he's doing the right thing while he's actually acting contrary to God's will.

So maybe think about someone who speaks harshly to another person, and then he justifies it in his own mind saying, well, I was just being honest. And maybe he was being honest.

[8:05] But Scripture requires both truthfulness and love. Not to mention kindness and humility and gentleness.

So sincerity alone doesn't make his conduct righteous. Now, last time we considered God's promise in Ezekiel 36 to give his people new hearts and to cause them to walk in his statutes.

But this new heart doesn't instantly give us perfect knowledge of God's will, as convenient as that would be. We still suffer from ignorance and mistaken judgments and sinful desires and habits that certainly need correction.

So even when we sincerely want to please God, we still stand in need of learning more accurately what actually pleases Him. And how do we do that?

Well, we have His law. We have His word, which serves as a rule of life. It directs our conduct according to His revealed will, and because it comes from God Himself, it carries genuine authority over us as His creatures.

[9:18] Notice how David responds to God's instruction here. Look at verse 10. More to be desired are they than gold, even much fine gold, sweeter also than honey, and drippings of the honeycomb.

So David doesn't stop at acknowledging that God's commandments are authoritative. He finds them desirable. He regards them as precious, because really of the One who gave them, not to mention the wisdom they contain for him.

He recognizes the goodness of God's law. Now, that's not to say that obedience is always easy.

Sometimes God's commandments require us to deny very strong desires within ourselves, to make difficult sacrifices at times.

But David understands that God's instruction is good, even when obeying is difficult. He trusts the goodness and the wisdom of the One who commands him.

So David sees God's law as a rule of life, which is always good, but he doesn't stop there. As he considers it further, his attention turns toward his own shortcomings, his own sinfulness.

[10:33] Look at verse 11. Moreover, by them is your servant warned. In keeping them there is great reward. Who can discern his errors?

Declare me innocent from hidden faults. So not only does the law give David wisdom and direction as a rule of life, but it also warns him about sin.

Who can discern his errors? You see, David is acknowledging that he doesn't have perfect knowledge, even of himself. He surely recognizes some of his sins, but there are others that he hasn't recognized.

His conscience may be relatively quiet about some things, and it's not because he's innocent, but because he hasn't yet understood how his thoughts or his conduct violate God's will.

And there's an interesting connection here with the beginning of the psalm. In verse 6, David describes the sun as it travels across the heavens, and he says there is nothing hidden from its heat.

[11:41] And now in verse 12, he speaks about his hidden faults. Just as the sun reaches places that might otherwise remain in darkness, God's word searches the hidden places of our hearts.

But how does this happen? How does the law expose what is hidden within us? Well, for that, let's return to Romans chapter 7, because Paul gives us a really helpful example of this.

Now, we spent most of our time in Romans 7 last week, primarily looking at verses 1 through 6, and I don't want to repeat everything we've talked about, but there's another aspect of Paul's argument that is relevant here.

Paul shows us not only how sin reacts to the law, but also how the law brings sin into clear view.

Let me read verses 7 through 13. This is Romans chapter 7. What then shall we say? That the law is sin? By no means.

[12:55] 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. 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.

And I'll stop right there. So Paul uses the example of the 10th commandment. You shall not covet.

And I suppose he chooses this particular commandment because more explicitly than the other commandments, this one directly addresses inward desires.

[14:16] It's not necessarily something you can see in another person. You could covet your neighbor's possessions without ever attempting to say, take them.

You could envy someone else's circumstances while maintaining an outward appearance of kindness toward them. You could secretly resent another person's success while publicly congratulating them.

So the 10th commandment reaches into that hidden part of our lives. Now, the Apostle Paul, he knew the 10th commandment long before he became a Christian.

He was a Pharisee. And as a Pharisee, he was thoroughly educated in the Scriptures. But of course, there's a difference between knowing the words of a commandment and truly understanding that commandment and its full implications, particularly for your own heart.

I mean, just think about what Paul says elsewhere concerning his former life. For example, in Philippians 3, he describes himself as blameless with respect to righteousness under the law.

[15:28] That's how he once saw himself. But this particular commandment, the 10th commandment, exposed something in him that outward religious observance could not conceal.

It reveals sin even within. By the way, I once had someone ask me, why is coveting a sin? Have you ever thought about this?

I think that's a great question. Why is it a sin? It doesn't hurt anyone, right? You're not taking anything from anyone. It's just private thoughts and feelings. And so what's the problem?

Well, you may remember when we discussed how God's law is concerned not only with outward actions, but also our hearts, right? In Matthew 5, you can go back and read that again.

Jesus shows us the depth of the intention of God's law, all of his moral commandments. Maybe you've never murdered anyone, but have you been angry with someone?

[16 : 33] Have you harbored hatred in your heart? Well, that too is a violation of God's moral law. But more to the point, coveting is sinful because if for no other reason, it is essentially a rejection of God's providence.

Now, not every desire for something we don't possess is covetousness. There's nothing inherently sinful about, say, wanting to improve our circumstances. The problem is when desire becomes discontentment with God's provision or maybe an inordinate longing for what belongs to someone else.

Think about it. God has given us what he's given us. Possessions, circumstances, relationships, opportunities. But when we look at what someone else has and we covet what they have, we are effectively saying, God, you haven't given me enough.

I don't like what you've given me. I want something else. So once again, we see how God's command doesn't merely forbid us from taking some outward action.

It's not enough for us to avoid stealing from someone. God's law cuts right to the heart. And in the case of the 10th commandment, it exposes even our discontentment and our envy, which lie at the heart of some of the other commandments, in fact.

[18 : 06] But getting back to what Paul says here, we've covered some of this already. Paul is arguing that the moral law is good. He says so explicitly. But when you confront sinful people who love the darkness and hate the light with that good moral law, their sinfulness naturally responds to it by wanting the very things the law forbids.

So the law is not sin, as Paul says, but it certainly reveals sin. It just brings it right to the surface. And not only that, but as he says in verse 8, sin, seizing an opportunity through the commandment, produced in me all kinds of covetousness.

As we discussed last time, the commandment does not create our sinful desires, but sin can seize upon it as an opportunity for further rebellion.

It's like telling the child, don't do that thing, and that's the only thing they want to do now. But as I said, the law also reveals sin. In verse 13, Paul goes as far as to say, through the commandment, sin might become sinful beyond measure.

What does he mean by that? Well, on the first level, the law tells us what is sinful, right? Murder is a sin, theft is a sin.

[19 : 30] But the law goes even further by revealing the true character of sin. Just like in the example of coveting, we may sense that it's wrong, but that doesn't mean we appreciate how wrong it really is or why.

For example, even the unbeliever can recognize that envy might make them unhappy or possibly hurt their relationship with other people, depending on how far that envy goes.

But God's law comes along and reveals something far more serious about it. Envy is a violation of God's righteous will for His creatures.

It expresses dissatisfaction with His providence. It also fails to love our neighbors as ourselves. So the law gives us a much more serious understanding of sin than we would otherwise have.

It teaches us to see that sin is not merely harmful behavior. It is that. But fundamentally, it is a rebellion against God, our Creator and Lord.

[20 : 42] And Paul is very careful here to distinguish between the goodness of the law and the evil that it exposes. In verse 12, he says, so the law is holy and the commandment is holy and righteous and good.

Again, the problem is not the commandment. The problem is the sinful heart that violates it, that's confronted by it. So you might think of a bright light that shines into a room that hasn't been cleaned for a really long time.

Well, when it was still dark, maybe that room didn't look half bad. You couldn't see the layer of dust and dirt over everything. But when the light shines, of course, that light is going to expose everything.

That light is not going to make the room dirty, is it? But it will expose the dirt. And that's what God's law does to us, particularly in our hearts.

The commandments of God reveal sin that we might otherwise overlook. And as Paul has shown us, the reaction of our sinful hearts to these commandments exposes the rebellious character of our

sin and our sinful nature.

[21 : 59] And this helps us understand what the confession means when it says, the law exposes the sinful corruptions of their natures, hearts, and lives.

So by nature, the confession is, by our nature, I should say, the confession is referring to that sinful corruption that remains within us.

Last time we looked briefly at the end of Romans 7. While the believer has been regenerated and given a new heart, we have not yet been made perfect.

Sin still dwells within us, producing desires and inclinations that are contrary to God's will. When the confession refers to our hearts, it's speaking to the sinful thoughts and motives and desires that remain within us, even though God has given us renewed desires.

Again, the commandments don't just apply to our outward behaviors. It's not only wrong to murder, but it's also wrong to hate. It's not only wrong to steal, but it's also wrong to covet.

[23 : 07] It's not only wrong to commit adultery, but it's also wrong to lust, and so on. So, the law affects concerns, I should say, our hearts, as well as our outward actions.

Then the confession mentions our lives. That is, everything. Our words, our choices, our habits, everything. In short, the law exposes our sin thoroughly.

It examines our outward conduct, as well as our most private thoughts and feelings. And as the case often is, it often reveals a disconnect between the two, between our habits, between our conduct, and our hearts.

For example, let's say you spoke to someone disrespectfully, out of anger. Well, you may immediately recognize that your words were sinful, but you may also think to yourself, well, what I was really feeling was righteous indignation.

But is that really why you became so angry? Or was it because your pride was wounded? Are you secretly harboring hatred toward this other person?

[24 : 23] You see, the law teaches us to ask questions like these. That's why David wrote, who can discern his errors? Declare me innocent from hidden faults. In other words, David relies on God's law to expose sins he might otherwise overlook so that he might repent of those sins, that he might change his ways.

In verse 13 of Psalm 19, he says, keep back your servant also from presumptuous sins. Let them not have dominion over me.

Well, what does he mean by presumptuous sins? Well, some sins are hidden from our awareness, but others, we commit deliberately. We know we are sinning, and yet we do it anyhow.

That's a presumptuous sin. And David's primary concern is that he might avoid all sin, which brings us to the next line of the confession.

It says, as they examine themselves in light of the law, they come to further conviction of humiliation for and hatred of sin.

[25 : 36] So, by conviction, the framers mean recognizing our sin for what it is. We stop excusing it and minimizing it or redefining it as something harmless.

then by humiliation, they mean we go a step further. We not only acknowledge sin for what it is, but we also confess that we are personally guilty of it.

We take responsibility for it. We humble ourselves in that way. And then comes hatred of sin. So, rather than merely regretting the, say, the consequences of our sin, we begin to hate the sin itself. And we hate it because it is contrary to God's holiness and His goodness. And there's a difference here between hating the consequences and hating the sin itself.

It's one thing to hate that sinning leads to undesirable consequences. It's quite another to hate sin because it is an offense to God and all that is good.

[26 : 42] this is more than feeling increasingly bad about ourselves, by the way. By His word and spirit, God changes how we judge our sin and what we desire to do about it.

Now, as David ends his prayer in Psalm 19, he says in verse 14, let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, my rock and my redeemer.

So you'll notice that he's asking for something more than forgiveness. He wants his life to be pleasing to God in every way. He wants to be thoroughly conformed to God's will.

So the law has brought him from admiration to self-examination and then from self-examination to repentance and from repentance all the way to a renewed desire for obedience in all things.

And through it all, he recognizes that he needs the mercy and help of God, which is why he refers at the very end to the Lord as my redeemer.

[27:59] That's an admission that he knows he can't do it alone. And God knows we cannot do it alone, which is why with the new covenant God promised to enable us to walk in his statutes and keep his judgment.

That is why the New Testament says we have been created or recreated, if you will, in Christ Jesus for good works that we might what? Walk in them.

Finally, our redeemer not only saves us from the law's condemnation, but he also enables us to keep that law.

And that leads us to a vital point in all of this. You see, we might be tempted to hear what David said in Psalm 19 or what Paul says in Romans 7 and think, fair enough.

I have a newfound respect for the moral law as a believer. I no longer think of it as irrelevant for the Christian. And that's good. That's not enough.

[29:06] According to the Bible, we must go beyond hearing God's law or even claiming to respect God's law. In fact, it should produce in us more than knowledge of sin or even sorrow over our sin.

And to show you what I mean, let me read to you from James 1. Starting at verse 19 in James 1, James writes, Know this, my beloved brothers, let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger, for the anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God.

Therefore, put away all filthiness and rampant wickedness and receive with meekness the implanted word which is able to save your souls. But, be doers of the word and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.

For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks intently at his natural face in a mirror. For he looks at himself and goes away at once and forgets what he was like.

But the one who looks into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and perseveres, being no hearer who forgets but a doer who acts, he will be blessed in his doing.

[30:28] So clearly, James is not describing here someone who openly rejects scripture or denies its authority.

The danger here is that someone might hear God's word, openly accept it, but then not obey it. They're familiar with it, evidently, but they're not following it and they're not growing in it. And James uses a simple illustration to make his point. So we might imagine someone who looks at himself in a mirror before he leaves the house and he notices that something about his appearance needs attention.

Whatever it is, maybe his hair is a mess, maybe he forgot to shave, maybe he has food stuck between his teeth, who knows. But instead of responding appropriately to what he sees in the mirror, he just walks out of the house and he forgets all about it.

Well, in that case, what was the point of looking into the mirror? What was the point of having the mirror? It showed him something about himself, but what good did it do him if he was unwilling to do anything with that information?

[31:44] And according to James, that's what happens when we hear God's word without obeying it. It may show us things that are wrong in our lives. It may expose sin in our lives.

But then we just walk away without allowing it to change us. On the other hand, he says, but the one who looks into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and perseveres, being no hearer who forgets but a doer who acts, he will be blessed in his doing.

Now, as I've said, we don't typically associate any law with the concept of liberty. But notice that James has already spoken of the word that brought us forth, that made us born again in verse 18. And the implanted word that we are to receive in verse 21. So when he calls it the law of liberty, we have to understand this in light of the gospel.

God's law does not free us merely by telling us how to live. Rather, Christ has delivered us from sin's dominion and through his spirit we can now receive God's instruction with hearts that increasingly desire to obey them.

[33:07] And that's why James doesn't merely tell us to look into the law. He also says we should persevere in it. We should continually examine ourselves in light of God's word and put what we learn into practice so that it increasingly shapes the entirety of our lives.

And I'll remind you that James is speaking here to Christian believers. As the confession says, despite not being under the law as a covenant of works, the law is still very useful to believers as a rule of life that informs them of the will of God and their duty.

That hasn't changed. Old covenant, new covenant, the rule of life has not changed. Now, in the time remaining, let's focus on that last part of the confession that I read.

So, as we examine ourselves in light of the law and we come into further conviction of humiliation for and hatred of sin, we also get a clearer view of our need for Christ and the perfection of His obedience.

So, there's two important things mentioned here. Number one is our need for Christ and number two is the perfection of His obedience. These are two more things that we gain by reading and studying and meditating on God's law specifically His moral law.

[34 : 47] So, we've already established that the law cannot save us. It can reveal our sin but it cannot remove our sin and that's why we need Christ.

But more than that, our need for Christ doesn't end at conversion. Even after we've been justified, we remain dependent upon Him.

We still struggle with sin. We still fall short of God's righteousness. We still need His grace. So, I mentioned Paul's former confidence in his religious accomplishments as a Pharisee.

Right? But listen to what he says in Philippians chapter 3 verses 8 and 9. Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord.

For His sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish in order that I may gain Christ and be found in Him. Not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith.

[36 : 02] Now, we've already discussed justification so I won't repeat all of that but notice Paul's attitude toward Christ. He considers everything else a loss compared to the surpassing worth of knowing Christ.

All of those religious accomplishments that once gave him confidence in himself no longer serve as the foundation of his hope. Not at all.

His confidence even now as one who has already been justified is entirely in Christ. And you see the more thoroughly we understand God's law the more I think we can appreciate what Paul is saying here.

As the law exposes our sins we discover more and more just how far short we fall of God's righteousness.

and in turn that produces in us a greater appreciation for the righteousness we have in Christ.

[37 : 10] But there's yet another aspect of this and it's the perfection of Christ's obedience. You see God's law doesn't merely show us how we have failed it also shows us how perfectly Jesus succeeded in obeying the moral law.

So think again about the Ten Commandments let's say. We can see how easily we become dissatisfied with God's providence. We often covet what someone else has been given.

Do we not? God's but Jesus never once did that. Not once. He was always perfectly content with his father's will.

Even when that required tremendous suffering think about the Garden of Gethsemane facing the worst suffering anyone could ever experience what did he pray? Nevertheless not my will but yours be done.

Or consider the Sixth Commandment. How often have we struggled with sinful anger or resentment or hatred but Christ he never once harbored sinful hatred toward anyone.

[38 : 35] Even when his enemies crucified him what did he pray? Father forgive them for they know not what they do. And we could go through each and every commandment in exactly the same way.

Every one of those commandments is going to reveal some failure in ourselves but at the same time we are going to learn more and more of how Christ was perfectly obedient in every single way and he obeyed not merely in outward actions but in every thought and motive and desire of his heart.

As he said in John 8 29 I always do things that are pleasing to God the Father. Always. We can't even come close to saying that.

Even on our best days we cannot say that we have done everything pleasing to God but Jesus could say it. And he could say it truthfully and he could say it about the entirety of his life. And this is far more significant than we may realize at first glance because Christ's obedience is not merely an example for us to follow or admire.

[39 : 51] Yes, he gives us the embodiment of the moral law so yes, he is an example to us for sure. But more than that, when we study the life of Christ, we are reminded that his righteousness is the only righteousness upon which our salvation depends.

Think about what it costs to be reconciled to God. He fulfilled every obligation of righteousness, everyone that we have failed to fulfill, and he bore the judgment that our disobedient deserved, our disobedience deserved, despite the fact that he kept that law perfectly.

And of course, our salvation rests entirely upon his finished work and his obedience. But of course, we don't stop at admiring his obedience.

We are called to imitate it. In 1 John 2 6, John writes, whoever says he abides in him ought to walk in the same way and which he walked.

So the Lord's obedience is both the righteousness in which we trust for salvation and the example we are called to follow. Now, as Paul continues in Philippians 3 in verse 12, he acknowledges that he has not yet obtained perfection.

[41 : 20] But he says, I press on to make it my own because Christ Jesus has made me his own. So because Christ has pursued Paul and redeemed him and rescued him from the condemnation of the law, Paul says, I treasure nothing more in this world than Christ.

I would give up anything else just to know Christ. And more than that, he essentially says, though he has freed me from the law in one sense, there is only one way I wish to go in this life.

I will follow Christ. I want to know him more fully. I want to become more like him. And that necessarily includes walking in obedience to God's moral law.

And I think David really captured something of this when he said, let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, my rock and my redeemer.

You see, David treasured God's law because it revealed God's will and he allowed that law to expose his sin and then he turned to the Lord for forgiveness and help, asking that his life might become increasingly pleasing to God.

[42 : 41] That's precisely, precisely how the Christian ought to use the law of God. It teaches us how to live, it exposes the sin that remains within us, and it leads us toward repentance and a renewed obedience.

And through it all, it deepens our appreciation, our admiration for Jesus Christ, who obeyed perfectly where we have failed over and over again, and who by his spirit is now making us more like himself every day.

So again, to those Christians who say the moral law, is not really relevant under the new covenant, I would say that an important part of our redemption has been greatly overlooked.

We might summarize things this way. Christ has freed us from the law as a covenant of works, not so that we may disregard God's commandments, but so that we may finally understand, appreciate, and obey them as his redeemed people.

Let's pray. Heavenly Father, we thank you for your holy and righteous law. Forgive us for the many ways we have fallen short of your commands, including sins we hardly recognize in ourselves.

[44 : 14] By your word and spirit, expose what is sinful in our hearts. Lead us to sincere repentance and give us a growing desire to please you. And above all, help us to treasure Jesus Christ, whose perfect obedience is our righteousness, whose grace is sufficient for our every need.

Make us a people that not only hear your word, but do it also, do it faithfully, do it happily. In Christ's name we pray. Amen.