



SERMON NOTES & TRANSCRIPT

The Ministry of Death

The Law of Moses Has Ended, and the Ministry of the Spirit Has Come

The law is a ministry of death and condemnation, designed to bring us to the end of ourselves. In Jesus we receive the ministry of the Spirit and of righteousness, and as we behold His glory as in a mirror, our beholding is impacting our becoming.

PREACHED BY

Pastor Jason Mayfield

DATE

September 13, 2026

SERIES

Our Father, Week 2 of 4

MAIN TEXT

2 Corinthians 3:4-18

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Sermon Transcript

Amen. We are in a series on the Lord's Prayer. I'm calling that a macro series on the Lord's Prayer. It's gonna be an extended series that we're gonna be going through for several months, and we're breaking it down piece by piece, part by part, and right now we are in the Our Father portion of our series. And what we're doing every week, we are reciting the Lord's Prayer. And so I have it on the screen for those of you that don't know the whole thing. If you missed church on Labor Day, that's what you missed. You missed the pastor misquote the Lord's Prayer.

Here we go. I want us all to say this together.

MATTHEW 6:9-13 ESV

⁹ Pray then like this: "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. ¹⁰ Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. ¹¹ Give us this day our daily bread, ¹² and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. ¹³ And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

Say, Our Father. Our Father. Who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever and ever. Amen. Come on, give the Lord a good praise right there. And the reason we're doing that every week is because we wanna get this template into your brain, where throughout the day you can recite the Lord's Prayer and use it as a jumping-off point to begin communicating with the Lord about the things that are going on in your life.

Now, last week we started this micro-series, this Our Father series, and we looked at Romans chapter 5. Now, I would normally come up here and say, "If you weren't here last week or you haven't, go back and watch that message." I would normally say that. That would be normal, generic stuff I'd say. I need you to hear me. If you weren't here last week, you need to go back and listen to last week's message, because I am literally going to start preaching right where I stopped last week, and I'm gonna take a turn, and we're gonna start talking about something additionally.

Last week we looked at Romans 5. Now, the big idea of what we talked about is that your revelation of the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the, your revelation of the grace of God, is going to determine how much you see that grace manifest in your life. When you put your faith in Jesus Christ, there is a spiritual manifestation of grace which is done. That is signed, sealed, delivered. There's nothing else to do. When you put your faith in Jesus Christ, in the heavenlies your name is written down in the Lamb's book of life, you are saved, saved, saved. That's good news.

But there's also a physical manifestation of grace that is governed by your understanding of the grace of God that has been extended to you. The more you understand the grace of God that is found in Jesus Christ, the more you will see a breakthrough in your life. Not the more you pray, not the more you serve, not the more you give. Now, all of those things can have effect in your life, but they only have effect if they're powered by the finished work of Jesus Christ. On their own, they do nothing for you. You have to have an understanding, an insight, and a revelation of the grace of God in order to get that physical manifestation.

Now, last week in Romans 5, what we really talked about in terms of the content of the chapter is we talked about Adam versus Jesus. We talked about sin versus grace. That's really what we were talking about last week. Now, I want you to know that that is not a message that ruffles a lot of people's feathers. That is what we would call a very basic insight, basic teaching on the doctrine of justification. Everybody agrees on this stuff. Everybody agrees that you're a sinner. There's nothing you can do. Well, everybody in the evangelical world, let me say that.

Everybody agrees that you're a sinner, and the only way that you can be saved is by putting your faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, that we're not saved by works, but we're saved by grace through faith. That everybody's on the same page there. The, where we all get a little tense around the subject of grace isn't the moment you get saved, it's what happens next. And this is where the enemy comes in as crafty as he can, and he begins to pluck out a revelation of grace from your life. Now, I'm gonna be careful not to preach it this morning 'Cause we could go if I get there.

But I want you to know that there is actually some prophetic insight that the Lord's given me on how this happens, maybe some apostolic insight. I'm gonna share it with you eventually. But as soon as you get saved, the enemy starts to try to reinforce that it is your behavior that not only saves you, but keeps you. The enemy wants you to keep trying to earn everything from the Lord. The enemy wants to make sure that whenever you mess up, you feel like you've fallen out of favor with the Lord. That's got a word. It's called condemnation. It's called condemnation.

So if the enemy can get you feeling condemned and feeling disqualified, what'll happen is you'll just give up on what the Lord has for you. You'll just run in the other direction, not because you want to sin, but because you've realized you can't be good enough. And so you'll run off in another direction. You'll run from the Lord. So what we're gonna talk about today is where the rubber really meets the road when it comes to grace. We're gonna talk about what happens after you have become a Christian. What is the role of grace in your life? Well, let me just tell you right now, most preachers in a Pentecostal spirit-filled church would get up here and tell you it's to change you.

It's, grace is gonna empower you, brother, and make you live right, which is true to some degree, but that is not what grace is. Those are fringe benefits of grace. If you focus on the fringe benefits of grace, you will not get the breakthrough of grace. That's good. We're gonna talk about this thing and some of y'all are gonna go, "What?" I'm gonna ask you to lean in. Lean in. Like Paul said in Galatians chapter 2, I believe it is, "I will not nullify the grace of God.

GALATIANS 2:21 ESV

²¹ I do not nullify the grace of God, for if righteousness were through the law, then Christ died for no purpose.

I will not nullify the grace of God." So we're gonna talk about the beautiful, reckless grace of God.

Because Jesus died on the cross for people who I really don't care for But that's the reckless grace of God that says, "I'll just get them all." In Jesus' name, amen? All right. Now I feel like I can actually preach this message. Here we go. Last week we ended right here. We talked about Adam and Jesus, but then we had a third person introduced, and the third person is Moses. It said that death reigned from Adam to Moses.

ROMANS 5:12-14 ESV

¹² Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned—¹³ for sin indeed was in the world before the law was given, but sin is not counted where there is no law. ¹⁴ Yet death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those whose sinning was not like the transgression of Adam, who was a type of the one who was to come.

So we had a third person who was introduced, Moses. Moses is an identifier of the law. In fact, he's an identifier of what is called in the Bible, the Law of Moses.

Romans 5:20 says this.

ROMANS 5:20 ESV

²⁰ Now the law came in to increase the trespass, but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more,

This is where we ended last week. “Now the law came in to increase the trespass, but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more.” Somebody ought to just go ahead and pause right there and give the Lord a praise. That is, that was the Apostle Paul preaching good to you in Jesus’ name. “The law came in to increase the trespass, but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more.” Now, I wanna just tell you, because this is what the accusation is whenever you start messing with the cha-cha, and I came here to mess with your theological cha-cha this morning.

We’re gonna throw your rhythm off a little bit today. When you start teaching stuff like this, people say, “Well, that’s the only place that says that. You gotta read that in context.” Okay, thank you. I’m glad. 30 times plus through the scripture, thanks for telling me I need to read the context. Let me give you a couple of more verses out of Romans. This is Romans 3:21.

ROMANS 3:21 ESV

²¹ But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it—

I just wanna make sure we’re clear. I’m gonna go through these fast. I want you to hear these. Now, “But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it.”

That is to say that the Law and the Prophets, the Old Testament, there is still value in it. They bear witness to it, but we are no longer righteous by the law. That is not something that is possible. The next one, 7:5.

ROMANS 7:5 ESV

⁵ For while we were living in the flesh, our sinful passions, aroused by the law, were at work in our members to bear fruit for death.

Romans 7:5 says, “For while we were living in the flesh, our sinful passions, aroused by the law, were at work in our members to bear fruit for death.” Keep that up for a moment. While we were living in the flesh, our sinful passions were what? Aroused by the law. The law brought about your sinful passions. It made your sinful passions worse.

It didn’t make them better. You didn’t hear thou shalt not and thou shalt didn’t anymore. You heard thou shalt not, and you said, “Maybe I wanna go do that. Maybe I wanna go...” It was quick. Moses receives the Ten Commandments verbally from the Lord in front of the people of Israel. The people of Israel were so scared by the Ten Commandments, the first one being, “Thou shalt have no other God before me,” okay?

EXODUS 20:3 ESV

³ “You shall have no other gods before me.

And the people of Israel are so scared, they look at Moses and they say, “Do not let the Lord speak to us again. We want you to be a proxy for us.

You go up on the mountain, you hear from the Lord. We don’t want none of that.” So Moses does just that.

EXODUS 20:18-21 ESV

¹⁸ Now when all the people saw the thunder and the flashes of lightning and the sound of the trumpet and the mountain smoking, the people were afraid and trembled, and they stood far off ¹⁹ and said to Moses, “You speak to us, and we will listen; but do not let God speak to us, lest we die.” ²⁰ Moses said to the people, “Do not fear, for God has come to test you, that the fear of him may be before you, that you may not sin.” ²¹ The people stood far off, while Moses drew near to the thick darkness where God was.

He goes up on the mountain. The Lord gives him Ten Commandments on tablets that are engraved from stone. The Lord has brought those tablets out of the rock. He has written on it with his finger. He gives it to Moses. By the time Moses is back down on the ground, they aren’t being disobedient to their parents, they aren’t cheating on their spouses, they aren’t stealing from one another. They have already created a golden calf, another god that they are worshiping.

The law, for whatever reason, I’m not here to explain the mechanics of you. The Bible says it, I believe it, that settles it. That’s how I’m gonna preach today. But for whatever reason, when you get under the teaching of the law, there is something that is aroused inside of you that causes you to want to do it all the more. So it took literally no time. The people are down on the ground. They’re worshiping this golden calf. They’ve broken the first commandment, and then something prophetic happens. This isn’t in my notes. This ain’t good for the timer, but we put another TV in here to try to get me on track, amen.

Moses sees this. Does anybody know what he does? He throws the Ten Commandments down on the ground, and they shatter.

EXODUS 32:15-19 ESV

¹⁵ Then Moses turned and went down from the mountain with the two tablets of the testimony in his hand, tablets that were written on both sides; on the front and on the back they were written. ¹⁶ The tablets were the work of God, and the writing was the writing of God, engraved on the tablets. ¹⁷ When Joshua heard the noise of the people as they shouted, he said to Moses, “There is a noise of war in the camp.” ¹⁸ But he said, “It is not the sound of shouting for victory, or the sound of the cry of defeat, but the sound of singing that I hear.” ¹⁹ And as soon as he came near the camp and saw the calf and the dancing, Moses’ anger burned hot, and he threw the tablets out of his hands and broke them at the foot of the mountain.

Almost as a prophetic insight to say, “No matter what, you are gonna break this law. You cannot keep it.” Somebody, I’m telling you, I’m ready to preach today. Second, let’s look at Romans 8:3.

ROMANS 8:3 ESV

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

Romans 8:3. This is the last one I wanna give you. “For God has done what the law, weakened by flesh, could not do.” Okay. This tells you right here, God has done what the law, weakened by flesh, could not do. Is the problem the law? No. Does the law come from the Lord?

Yes. Is the law good? Well, if you use it lawfully, it is. The law can, the law, it has value to it. The problem is the law cannot do what it was actually designed to do, which is to make you righteous. It can’t do that. Why? You. You’re the problem. Because it’s weakened by flesh. Why? Well, because the law is arousing your sinful nature. It’s creating this tension where you can’t do it even though it’s telling you exactly what to do. Have you ever wondered why Moses writes this in Deuteronomy?

DEUTERONOMY 30:15-19 ESV

¹⁵ “See, I have set before you today life and good, death and evil. ¹⁶ If you obey the commandments of the LORD your God that I command you today, by loving the LORD your God, by walking in his ways, and by keeping his commandments and his statutes and his rules, then you shall live and multiply, and the LORD your God will bless you in the land that you are entering to take possession of it. ¹⁷ But if your heart turns away, and you will not hear, but are drawn away to worship other gods and serve them, ¹⁸ I declare to you today, that you shall surely perish. You shall not live long in the land that you are going over the Jordan to enter and possess. ¹⁹ I call heaven and earth to witness against you today, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and curse. Therefore choose life, that you and your offspring may live,

The Lord says to the people, He says, “I lay before you life and death.

Choose life.” That seems real simple. And he says, “I’m gonna make you rich.” This is the promise that he’s telling these people. This isn’t prosperity preaching. This is good, Biblical exegesis. He’s telling these people, “I’m gonna make you

filthy rich. I'm gonna give you stuff you ain't ever had. I'm gonna give you houses you don't have to build, land you didn't have to sow.

DEUTERONOMY 6:10-11 ESV

¹⁰ “And when the LORD your God brings you into the land that he swore to your fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give you—with great and good cities that you did not build, ¹¹ and houses full of all good things that you did not fill, and cisterns that you did not dig, and vineyards and olive trees that you did not plant—and when you eat and are full,

I'm gonna make you filthy, stinking rich. I lay before you life and death, blessing and cursing. Choose life, choose blessing.” And they go, “I think I'm gonna choose death and cursing over here.”

And we look at it like it's boneheaded. You do it. You do it. Okay, we're gonna go to 2 Corinthians chapter 3. That's where we're gonna land for the day. Even though I should probably just give an altar call right now. Wouldn't that be something? Go from an hour and 10 minutes to 10 minutes. Give you a rebate on that time I've been preaching, amen. 2 Corinthians chapter 3, 2 Corinthians chapter 3. When you're, when you're looking at 2 Corinthians, especially about the first handful of chapters, especially through chapter 4, kind of extends into chapter 7, and to a degree it's the whole book.

2 Corinthians is the Apostle Paul giving a defense of his ministry. It's a very interesting writing. If you're not familiar with the Corinthian church, they were, to say the least, a problem church. They had a lot of issues to the degree that Paul at times wouldn't even preach the Bible to them. He wouldn't preach the Torah to them. He would just go, “Guys, pagans don't even do the stuff you're doing.” That's in 1 Corinthians 5.

1 CORINTHIANS 5:1 ESV

¹ It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and of a kind that is not tolerated even among pagans, for a man has his father's wife.

So these were people who were kinda out there, and there's been some conflict come around Paul's preaching ministry. And it's been challenged.

There have been teachers that have come in and really started to say that Paul didn't operate in authority, didn't operate in power. And so Paul writes this letter as a defense. And he said, “I was gonna come to you.” And this makes me think me and Paul might be designed a little bit the same. He said, “I was gonna come to you, but I think it might be better if I send you this email first.

2 CORINTHIANS 2:1-4 ESV

¹ For I made up my mind not to make another painful visit to you. ² For if I cause you pain, who is there to make me glad but the one whom I have pained? ³ And I wrote as I did, so that when I came I might not suffer pain from those who should have made me rejoice, for I felt sure of all of you, that my joy would be the joy of you all. ⁴ For I wrote to you out of much affliction and anguish of heart and with many tears, not to cause you pain but to let you know the abundant love that I have for you.

Let y'all know what's about to happen, how I'm feeling." And so he's writing to them this defense of his ministry. When you get to the top of chapter 3, he goes into a refrain here where he's talking about letters of recommendation.

2 CORINTHIANS 3:1-3 ESV

¹ Are we beginning to commend ourselves again? Or do we need, as some do, letters of recommendation to you, or from you? ² You yourselves are our letter of recommendation, written on our hearts, to be known and read by all. ³ And you show that you are a letter from Christ delivered by us, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts.

And so he's been defending his ministry, defending his ministry, and then he says, "Do you need letters of recommendation?" In other words, "What do you need as a defense? Do you need, do you need me to print out data?" And listen, we're kinda in an age in the church here like this right now, too, and I do it 'cause it works, but doesn't mean it doesn't drive me crazy. It feels like we gotta have statistics for everything and studies for everything. And we're doing stuff right now, and I'm asking 20 pastors every time I make a decision. And you know, at the end of the day Wouldn't it just be good if we just said, "You know what?

Maybe the anointing that teaches us will, like, teach us." And we can just do that. And then what it really comes down to is not what the statistics say, not what, not what the other pastor. It comes down to this, what Paul says, "Does it work? Does it work?" So he says, "Do you need letters of recommendation from me?" He says, "Are you not our letters of recommendation? Are you not the letter of recommendation?" Are you not the one that when I found you, you were lost, you were dysfunctional. Now you pray in the Holy Ghost and you're full of power and now this little preacher came in here and got you all messed up and you think I'm...

What is wrong with you right now? That's what Paul's saying. But he poses this, "Are you not our letter of recommendation?" To really say what Jesus said. Jesus said concerning false teachers, false prophets, false apostles, he said, "You will know them by their fruit." What does their ministry produce?

MATTHEW 7:16 ESV

¹⁶ You will recognize them by their fruits. Are grapes gathered from thornbushes, or figs from thistles?

What does their teaching produce? And then he goes into this Like he just drops in this insight into grace versus the law of Moses, the new covenant versus the old covenant, Jesus versus Moses, and it almost as if it just flows out of him. It's an interruption to the beginning of 2 Corinthians.

It really doesn't sit in there and make a lot of sense. And out of his spirit possibly one of the most insightful portions of scripture on the topic he writes. And the reason he writes it, by the way, is because he's defending his ministry. What is his ministry? It's the gospel of the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ. He's teaching this stuff to these people. That's his ministry. This is where we're gonna pick up in chapter 3, verse 4.

2 CORINTHIANS 3:4-6 ESV

⁴ Such is the confidence that we have through Christ toward God. ⁵ Not that we are sufficient in ourselves to claim anything as coming from us, but our sufficiency is from God, ⁶ who has made us sufficient to be ministers of a new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit. For the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.

He says, "Such is the confidence that we have through Christ through God," or toward God, through Christ toward God. "Not that we are sufficient in ourselves to claim anything as coming from us, but our sufficiency is from God, who has made us sufficient to be ministers of a new covenant, not of the letter, but of the Spirit.

For the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life." Let me just toss in kinda where he starts here, talking about not being sufficient of himself. I'm gonna tell you, the more that you get a revelation of the grace of God, the more revelation you're gonna have of the grace of God. That's real deep right there. And what you'll notice is when you start to see results in areas that you go, "I kinda know what I can do. I kinda know what I can make happen." But then all of a sudden we start to see certain results in people's lives, or certain results in the church, or certain results in the kingdom.

And you go, "I don't have another way to explain that other than we came in here and us showing up just made space for the Lord to do it." And it's not so much our contribution. I tell preachers this all the time, 'cause we're all trying to be better preachers. The job really isn't to preach good. I wanna be a good preacher, 'cause other preachers watch me, and I wanna let them know who's boss. But I don't really preach to preach good. I preach to just interrupt your week for about 30 minutes to an hour. That way I can cause you just to stop, and maybe you get into this environment and the Holy Ghost can do something in your life because we've just interrupted.

And listen, there is no amount of good preaching that gets some of the results that we see happen. Why? It's the grace of God moving in the ministry. My qualification isn't me. I'm messed up. I am not a good pastor. I am not a good preacher. I'm not a good singer. That's not what I'm here for. I don't know how to do stuff. I walk around this building and look at things and go, "I don't even know what to do about that. I know it ain't right, but I don't know how to fix it." I'm nobody. But God. So he starts there, but then he ends that little sentence, that little section, with this line that's gonna take us there.

It says, "For the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life." He even says that my results, my sufficiency doesn't come from the letter, but from the Spirit. So we're already starting to see Paul is setting up the letter versus the Spirit.

2 CORINTHIANS 3:7-9 ESV

⁷ Now if the ministry of death, carved in letters on stone, came with such glory that the Israelites could not gaze at Moses' face because of its glory, which was being brought to an end, ⁸ will not the ministry of the Spirit have even more glory? ⁹ For if there was glory in the ministry of condemnation, the ministry of righteousness must far exceed it in glory.

He goes on to chapter 3, verse 7 and he says, “Now if the ministry of death, carved in letters on stone, came with such glory that the Israelites could not gaze at Moses’ face because of its glory, which was being brought to an end”. I wanna pause here. We’re talking about the law versus grace. It would probably be good if we did not assume on our knowledge.

Amen? We need to establish what is the law. When we talk about the Law of Moses, what is it? ‘Cause there’s a lot of teaching out here redefining what the Law of Moses is. Look, give me that verse back real quick, if you can. Chapter 3 verse 7, it says, “Now if the ministry of death, carved in letters on stone”. Just gonna do a little pop quiz here. Can anybody think of any moment in the Old Testament where there was something carved on stone? Anyone? I’ll give you a hint. There were two of ‘em. One for each hand. Right? This is talking about the Ten Commandments.

This is talking about the Ten Commandments, which is the cornerstone of the law. The cornerstone of the law is the Ten Commandments, meaning that everything that flows from the Ten Commandments is the Law of Moses. Starting with the Ten Commandments, flowing into the however many, over 600 laws that are given in the Old Testament. They all come out of it. Now, this is what people try to do. Well, one, they just try to ignore it. A lot of people try to act like this verse ain’t in the Bible, amen. But what they’ll do is they’ll take this and then they’ll say, “Well, the law actually has several sections.

So any time that Paul talks about the law, he’s not talking about the whole law.” And so they’ll say that it’s the moral and the civil and the law of ordinances. They’ll try to break it into multiple pieces of the law and they’ll say, “Well, the law of ordinances and sacrifices are gone. The civil law is obviously gone, but the moral law is still intact.” And so people will teach it this way. My friends, they all flow from the Ten Commandments. And here, let me just go ahead and give you this piece. There ain’t no civil and there ain’t no ordinance in the law that is carved in letters on stone.

That is all moral. All of it is moral. So the law cannot be separated into multiple pieces. I already feel like I done struck a chord with y’all, amen. I sound a little different than that other preacher y’all listen to on TV, amen. So the law is, put this in your brain, the Law of Moses is a composite whole. It is a composite whole. Why is this important? Because nobody sits in this room and has condemnation come into their life because they haven’t sacrificed a goat this week. Because nobody’s in here feeling like they don’t belong before the throne of God because they didn’t pay taxes to the King of Israel this week.

The civil and the law of ordinances is not impacting anybody in here. But when you come in here and you’re living in a functional lie that you have not settled with in your life. Hey, you may come in here and lift your hands and act like somebody, ‘cause it’s easy to fool people. But you know in your knower that you cannot get before the Lord and Him not know what’s going on in your life. You know He sees all that stuff. You know He knows your secrets. And if you stay away from Him, maybe you’ll be safe. Or you stay away. The law is a composite whole. The law is a composite whole.

Now, we need to know that going through this entirety of the chapter. That’s important. Everybody say, the law is a composite whole. That means the whole thing is one. It’s all one. Go back to verse seven. Now if the ministry of death, carved in letters on stone, came with such glory that the Israelites could not gaze at Moses’ face because of its glory, which was being brought to an end, will not the ministry of the Spirit have even more glory? For if there was glory in the ministry of condemnation, the ministry of righteousness must far exceed it in glory.

Let me just stop right here. I wanna pause here. Let me pause here. I want you to notice a couple of things that we just read, okay? The law is referenced to as a ministry. It’s referenced to as a ministry. The law has a ministry, and then the new covenant, Jesus, has a ministry. There are two ministries going on here. One of the ministries, the law, it says is the

ministry of death. It is the ministry of condemnation. Now, you may sit there and go, “Well, why would the Lord give us a law that brings about death and condemns us?” Well, that’s a real good question, and there’s a real good answer, because Galatians says that the law served as a tutor which led us to faith in Jesus Christ.

GALATIANS 3:24 ESV

²⁴ So then, the law was our guardian until Christ came, in order that we might be justified by faith.

The law is intended to make you see that you are incapable, so you will look to one who is capable. The law is intended to bring you to the end of yourself so that you go to the end of someone who has no end. I’m talking about the law is intended to do exactly what it sounds like it’s supposed to do: cause death in your life, bring about condemnation in your life. That’s exactly how it’s designed. But the ministry of Jesus Christ is referred to as the ministry of the Spirit. The ministry of righteousness. So while the law makes you feel like you are not good enough, Jesus makes you feel good enough because He’s good enough.

I’m talking about the ministry of righteousness today, the ministry of the Spirit. I wanna keep going, starting in verse 12.

2 CORINTHIANS 3:12-18 ESV

¹² Since we have such a hope, we are very bold, ¹³ not like Moses, who would put a veil over his face so that the Israelites might not gaze at the outcome of what was being brought to an end. ¹⁴ But their minds were hardened. For to this day, when they read the old covenant, that same veil remains unlifted, because only through Christ is it taken away. ¹⁵ Yes, to this day whenever Moses is read a veil lies over their hearts. ¹⁶ But when one turns to the Lord, the veil is removed. ¹⁷ Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. ¹⁸ And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.

Starting in verse 12 says, “Since we have such a hope, we are very bold. Not like Moses.” Let me just toss a little something in here real quick. I had a preacher reach out to me in the last couple of weeks, and he told me that I was too much. He told me I was too over the top, that I was too bold, that I said things I shouldn’t say, that I ought to know my place. And then I wrote him back and I said, “Thank you for the sermon illustration.”

I’m not kidding. He got that response. So he knew this moment was coming. He writes me this mess, and I’m gonna tell you why I’m that way Since we have such a hope, since we have such a hope, I’m not gonna be some coward Who downloads his little sermons off the internet and preaches a little one, two, three and a point. No. When I saw the grace of God, it brought out a boldness in me. You wanna know why I am the way I am? You wanna know why I want you to be like this too. I want you walking around town like you know somebody, ‘cause you do. If you know the Lord Jesus Christ.

That’s why I have boldness. I’ll get up here and scream and misquote stuff, amen. I don’t care ‘cause I’m bold. And I’m gonna be bold. I want you to be bold. This is gonna be a bold church. We’re not gonna be a little patty cake church around here. I’m not trying to stir up the hornets’ nest ever. I never come in here. There’s a reason that that crazy series I preached in the summer, there’s a reason it was the last one. There ain’t no strategy to it. I thought it was important for us to get that stuff down. I’m not trying to tick anybody off. I’m not trying to make anybody mad.

But when I get up here and I start talking through this stuff and I start preaching the gospel, I'm gonna tell you, every anointing in my life seems to just stand up on it. And whether it be apostolic, prophetic, pastoral, entrepreneurial, I get up here, man, and I get into the Word. It happens in my house. When I start praying, I had to act like I was doing something one morning 'cause I was in here praying the scripture and somebody walked in earlier and I thought they were gonna walk in on a Sunday morning. And I'm walking down in the front screaming.

And I thought, I'm practicing my sermon I just thought I probably looked crazy. Why? 'Cause I'm bold, 'cause I have such a hope. Since we have such a hope, we are very bold. Not like Moses. That's interesting. Not like Moses who would put a veil over his face so that the Israelites might not gaze at the outcome of what was being brought to an end.

EXODUS 34:33-35 ESV

³³ And when Moses had finished speaking with them, he put a veil over his face. ³⁴ Whenever Moses went in before the LORD to speak with him, he would remove the veil, until he came out. And when he came out and told the people of Israel what he was commanded, ³⁵ the people of Israel would see the face of Moses, that the skin of Moses' face was shining. And Moses would put the veil over his face again, until he went in to speak with him.

But their minds were hardened to, for to this day, when they read the old covenant, that same veil remains unlifted because only through Christ is it taken away. Yes, to this day, whenever Moses is read, a veil lies over their hearts.

But when one turns to the Lord, the veil is removed. The NASB talks about this a little differently. It talks about a fading glory, the glory that is fading. It's a fading glory, but it says here a glory that's being brought to an end. That the outcome might not be known, that it was being brought to an end. It's veiled. Moses is wearing a veil so you don't see what's coming about. I wanna tell you why this matters, what this little section said. It's because we have a natural draw towards the law of Moses. It is inexplicable, but the law of Moses demands that we reconcile ourselves unto God through the flesh, through the self-effort, that we work it out, that we make that thing happen on our own.

The flesh is looking for a solution. The flesh is looking for something to do to get right with God. And so what does it look towards? It looks towards the law of Moses because the law of Moses offers the flesh a solution. It offers your need to be in control a solution. If I just do this stuff, then I'll be right with God. And so it draws itself towards the law. But what we have to understand is that the law has a fading glory, but it still has a measure of glory. The law has a measure of glory on it. The law will get somebody to the cross. The law will normally get somebody over the line of salvation.

But the problem is, that's what 1 Timothy says, that "The law is not laid down for the just but for the unjust."

1 TIMOTHY 1:9 ESV

⁹ understanding this, that the law is not laid down for the just but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and sinners, for the unholy and profane, for those who strike their fathers and mothers, for murderers,

So it's, it is to bring people to a point where they know they need the Lord Jesus Christ. And so the law will get you up to that point. Hard preaching and ugly preaching will get you up to that point, and then you'll get saved. And you'll be there initially, 'cause what'll happen, you can get a little bit of run out of your flesh. You'd be good for a little while. You can be good for a minute. Y'all ever seen them videos of the kids where they sit them at a table and set a marshmallow in front of them?

Tell them not to eat it. And they just sit there, and you can see them Try not to eat the mushroom or the marshmallow. If you put a mushroom in front of a kid, he'll say, "See you in two days." So when that law brings you to the point of salvation, it brings you to the cross, you'll cross that finish line of salvation, and then all of a sudden you'll think, "Okay, now my responsibility is to forsake sin and live righteously and make God happy." And a lot of people try to do that when they get saved. A lot of you tried to do that when you got saved. And you get there, and you live that way, and then after a little while you start going, "I can't do that."

As good as it sounds, if we're all honest, I can't do it." So you either start to try to reinterpret what the scripture says, or you start trying to live a secret life and still act like you have it going on, 'cause at the end of the day, the flesh actually craves more approval from man than it So the law has a measure of glory, but it's a glory that's fading. It's a glory that's fading. Let me show you something in Galatians chapter 1 real quick. Galatians chapter 1 and Galatians chapter 3. I wanna, I wanna flip there and read these to you. Galatians 1 says this.

GALATIANS 1:6 ESV

⁶ I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting him who called you in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel—

Verse 6, it says, this is Paul writing. He says, "I'm astonished that you are so quickly deserting him who called you in the grace of Christ and turning to a different gospel." Well, the different gospel that's explained in Galatians is a different gospel. It's a gospel of works. It's a gospel of the law. It's a gospel of do, do, do. And he says, "I'm astonished that you are..." What, the phrase in here that's always stuck out to me is, "So quickly." Almost like Paul goes, "You know, we see this pretty often, but you guys got there faster than everybody else that we were seeing."

I'm stunned to see this happen so quickly." If you go over, because we've got a draw, by the way.

GALATIANS 3:1-3 ESV

¹ O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you? It was before your eyes that Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified. ² Let me ask you only this: Did you receive the Spirit by works of the law or by hearing with faith? ³ Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh?

If you look at chapter 3, Galatians 3, verse 1 here, it says, "O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you? It was before your eyes that Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified," meaning that the gospel had been preached to them, that the work had been finished. Verse 2 says, "Let me ask you only this. Did you receive the Spirit by works of the law or by hearing with faith? Are you so foolish having begun by the Spirit that you're now being perfected by the flesh?"

No. What starts in the Spirit, what must remain in the Spirit. We don't get saved by grace through faith and then turn back to the law. But because we have a natural draw towards the law, we have to be careful. What does it say here? It says, "Yes," verse 15 of 2 Corinthians 3, it says, "Yes, to this day, whenever Moses is read, a veil lies over their hearts." In other words, every time we're preaching the law, Now, some of y'all are going, "I don't think I've ever heard anybody preach the law," and you're right. Most preachers don't get up and preach the law.

They preach a derivative of the law. The same way that the Ten Commandments are the chief portion of the law and something else comes from it, when we preach the law the way that we do, we have a chief portion of it, we have the

Ten Commandments, and then we preach a version of the law that we call legalism. We call legalism, and it's just a derivative of the law. And this is basically where we may not be harping on the same stuff that the law says. For the most part, it is. But then we get down into these granular things, just like the law does. So say, here's the Ten Commandments, but also, "Hey, don't smoke, don't drink, don't chew, don't run around with girls who do."

You gotta watch out. Read your Bible every day. This is an Alabama one. Go to church or the devil will get you. If you've never gone north on 65, I'd encourage, take a trip up there. Mile marker, what is it? Mile marker 190. 190. This is legalism that causes us to That's a version of the law. And every time we start to preach the law, what happens? Every time you're sitting under the law, every time the law is preached, the law is read, what happens? A veil comes back over you. And you think it's gonna work, but it doesn't. You're veiled to the goodness of God.

You're veiled to the power of the gospel. And then when you turn to the Lord, listen to this. Let's go to verse 17. Now, where the Spirit of the Lord is... Oh, no, no, no, verse 16. I'm sorry. Verse 16 says, "But when one turns to the Lord, the veil is removed." The veil's removed. The veil is ripped off of you. When you turn to Jesus and you see what Jesus has done, you aren't gonna not be aware of His glory. How do you look into the face of the finished work of Jesus Christ and not see the glory of God? You can't. When you look towards Jesus, He'll draw you.

His love is evident. His power is evident. His goodness is evident. And when you look to the law, the only way you think you're gonna do it is by veiling your face. Covering your face doesn't work. Now, I do wanna say this. We see two ministries, and I'm gonna wrap up and I'm gonna be done. We see two ministries here. We have a ministry of death and condemnation. That's the ministry of Moses. It's the ministry of the law. We have the ministry of Jesus, the ministry of grace. It's the ministry of righteousness, the ministry of life. 2 Corinthians goes on and it talks about another ministry.

It's the ministry that belongs to gospel preachers. The responsibility of gospel preachers, the responsibility of a church like ours and a pulpit like ours. And this is in 2 Corinthians 5:18.

2 CORINTHIANS 5:18-19 ESV

¹⁸ All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation;

¹⁹ that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation.

It says, "All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation. That is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation." Thank you. We have the ministry of reconciliation. It is our job to help you. Think of it in an accounting term, like reconciling a budget.

It is our job to help you reconcile where your indebtedness is to the law and where your indebtedness is to the Lord. And when we get done reconciling that for you, you need to see that you cannot live righteously by the law, but every bit of righteousness that you need has been provided at the cross of Jesus Christ. Our job is not to get up here and to preach people into feeling like they're not good enough, and to feeling like they're less than, unless that message is to point them to one who is greater than. He's greater than our hearts, 1 John says.

1 JOHN 3:20 ESV

²⁰ for whenever our heart condemns us, God is greater than our heart, and he knows everything.

And so we point people to Jesus, who is enough, and by virtue of being enough, makes you enough.

And we teach people how to do what 2 Corinthians 3 ends telling us. Verse 17 says, “Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom.” Galatians says that it’s for freedom he has set us free.

GALATIANS 5:1 ESV

¹ For freedom Christ has set us free; stand firm therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery.

And what the law will try to do is, I just want you to hear how the law works. The law and legalism will come in and it’ll take that word freedom, and it’ll say, “See, where the Spirit of the Lord is, there’s freedom, brother. You never gonna sin again. You gonna be right. You gonna act right.” It’s funny, we only want other people to act right.

I ain’t never heard anybody talk about the law against themselves. They may brag a little bit in it, but they never talk about, “Well, I don’t get this right, and so I’m never...” No. Condemnation’ll do that to you, but you’re not applying the law to yourself. We always talk about what others do. And so we start talking about freedom, “Yeah, brother, you need to get free from all that bondage and sin.” No. Well, Galatians doesn’t say it’s freedom from sin. Galatians says it’s freedom for freedom’s sake, just to be free. Why are you free? To be free. Why did Jesus make you free?

To be free. Why are you free? So you’ll be free. Why? Free. Why are you free? To be free. That’s it. Free from what? All of it. Free from what? Sin? Sure. Free from condemnation? Sure. Free from poverty? Sure. Free from sickness? Yeah. Just free. You, what do you do with just freedom? I don’t know. I’m liking it. I enjoy it in Jesus’ name. What are you doing with your freedom? Having a good time. Where are you having a good time? In Jesus Christ. It’s for freedom, for freedom. Listen to this, verse 18, “And we all, with unveiled face” ‘Cause we’re not gonna preach this legalism law.

We’re not gonna do righteousness by behavior in this church. It don’t work. I done been down that road. It don’t work. So we with unveiled face, unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit. If you have an NASB 1995, it’s got a better translation of this word. I almost preached from the NASB this morning Right there where it says, “Beholding the glory of the Lord,” if you have an NASB in the church, one, you’re one of the most spiritually mature people in the whole church, by the way.

That’s a good Bible. But it translates it beholding as in a mirror. The Greek word is katoptrizo, and that’s literally what it means. It almost hearkens back to the brazen laver, which is a typology of the Word of God in the setup of the tabernacle in the temple. The brazen laver was made from what were like mirrors.

EXODUS 38:8 ESV

⁸ He made the basin of bronze and its stand of bronze, from the mirrors of the ministering women who ministered in the entrance of the tent of meeting.

So you would look in it, and you would, you would see yourself back. In the old covenant, in the tabernacle, you'd look in it and you'd see your uncleanness. But now, with unveiled face, not looking to the law for righteousness, not looking to legalism, not looking to myself, not looking to what I can do, not living up to the standard of the membership covenant of a church, not doing what they said I'm supposed to do and what. With unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord.

What is the glory of the Lord? It's Jesus Christ. It's Jesus. We're beholding the glory of the Lord, but we're beholding as in a mirror. You gotta get this. What Jesus has done is so sufficiently imputed to you. When you put your faith in him, it's done. Done. Everything you need to get right with God, be in relationship with God, have anything from God, supernatural breakthrough, healing, health, wholeness. I'm talking about you can eat your dessert before dinner. All of it. Everything you need has sufficiently been imputed to you by Jesus Christ. You are fully the righteousness of God in Christ.

2 Corinthians 5 says you're a new creation.

2 CORINTHIANS 5:17 ESV

¹⁷ Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.

Okay? You got it all. You've got it all. And so now we behold it as in a mirror. So now it's no longer just Jesus is good. Behold the glory of the Lord. You get up in the morning, and you go into the bathroom, and you start flossing your teeth, looking all messed up from the night before, and your hair's all messy, and you know what's looking back at you? The righteousness of God in Christ, fully I don't see myself anymore. I see what God has done through Jesus Christ, reconciling the world, including me, unto himself.

In a few weeks we're gonna talk about having a grace confession. I'm telling you, some of y'all need to stop. We're in the business world and there's a lot about affirmations. And affirmations are all fine, they're all good, but I'm telling you, if you'd stop talking about yourself so much and start talking about Jesus Christ in you, you might actually be able to get something done in your life. 'Cause he's fully capable where I am fully limited. And that righteousness has been given to me. I no longer look at myself, I look towards Jesus. We're beholding as in a mirror.

When I look at myself, I see the finished work of Christ. And I wrote this down a few weeks ago, I just felt the Spirit of the Lord speak to me. Because we're beholding as in a mirror, I wrote this down, that my beholding is impacting my becoming. As I behold him and the finished work of Christ, and I behold who I already am in the spiritual, now my becoming, my physical manifestation of grace is coming about in Jesus' mighty name. I just feel like I could worship. I wish I had a 60-piece orchestra and we'd sing for the next three hours. My God, his goodness God, I know me.

Do you know you? And to think He takes someone like me, and I'm operating fully on His credit today, in Jesus' name. Fully, fully. I'm fully the righteousness of God. The Bible says that He has made perfect those who are being sanctified.

HEBREWS 10:14 ESV

¹⁴ For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified.

Yeah, I may look a little funky to y'all, but when I come into the throne room, there ain't no, "Oh, there's that guy that." Nobody says that when I go into the secret place. See, when I go into the secret place, I just look like one of the boys, if you know what I'm saying. I belong there. I'm in the club. I'm in. Every time I go into the secret place, guess what?

I'm one of the preferred members in the secret place. When I go in, He knows my name. He calls me by name. He doesn't look at me in a way that's disappointing. He looks at me almost as if I was completely obedient to Him, because through Christ I am. In Jesus' mighty name. I'm telling you, if you get ahold of this over the next few weeks, God is gonna do a great work in your life. We are not made righteous by the law, but we are made righteous by the finished work of Jesus Christ. Hallelujah.

Preaching Notes

Before You Preach

This is the second message in the Our Father series, and it picks up exactly where week 1 stopped: Romans 5:20 and the law. Week 1 dealt with Adam and Jesus, sin and grace, which nearly every evangelical agrees on. This week moves to where the tension lives: what grace is for after you are saved. Expect some pushback, and ask people to lean in.

The message moves from Romans (the law arouses sin) to 2 Corinthians 3 (two ministries). Keep the passages on the screen. The key teaching moment is that the Law of Moses is a composite whole: people cannot keep the “moral” part and set the rest aside, because the part carved in stone is the Ten Commandments.

Introduction

MATTHEW 6:9-13 ESV

⁹ Pray then like this: “Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. ¹⁰ Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. ¹¹ Give us this day our daily bread, ¹² and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. ¹³ And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

Say the Lord’s Prayer together. We pray it every week so the template gets into your mind and becomes a jumping-off point for talking to the Lord through the day.

Recap of last week (Romans 5). Your revelation of the grace of God determines how much you see that grace manifest in your life.

- **The spiritual manifestation of grace is done.** When you put your faith in Jesus, your name is written in the Lamb’s Book of Life. Signed, sealed, delivered.
- **The physical manifestation is governed by your understanding of grace.** Not the more you pray, serve or give. Those things matter only when they are powered by the finished work of Jesus.

Last week was basic teaching on justification. Everybody in the evangelical world agrees you are a sinner, and you are saved by grace through faith, not by works. The tension around grace is not the moment you get saved. **It is what happens next.**

As soon as you get saved, the enemy starts to reinforce the idea that your behavior not only saves you but keeps you. He wants you to keep trying to earn everything from the Lord, and to feel that every time you mess up, you have fallen out of favor. That has a name: **condemnation**. If the enemy can get you feeling condemned and

disqualified, you will give up and run from the Lord, not because you want to sin, but because you have realized you can't be good enough.

So what is grace for after you are saved? Most preachers would say grace empowers you to live right. That is true to a degree, but those are fringe benefits of grace. **If you focus on the fringe benefits of grace, you will not get the breakthrough of grace.**

Paul said, "I do not nullify the grace of God" (Galatians 2:21). Today is about the beautiful, reckless grace of God, the grace that took Jesus to the cross for people we may not even like.

1. The Law Arouses Sin

Last week Romans 5 introduced Adam and Jesus, and then a third person: "death reigned from Adam to Moses" (Romans 5:14). Moses stands for the law.

ROMANS 5:20 ESV

²⁰ Now the law came in to increase the trespass, but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more,

Some will say, "That's the only place it says that. Read it in context." So here are a few more from Romans:

ROMANS 3:21 ESV

²¹ But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it—

The Law and the Prophets still have value. They bear witness. But we are no longer made righteous by the law.

ROMANS 7:5 ESV

⁵ For while we were living in the flesh, our sinful passions, aroused by the law, were at work in our members to bear fruit for death.

Our sinful passions were "aroused by the law." The law did not make them better. It made them worse. You heard "thou shalt not," and something in you wanted to.

Illustration: Sinai. It took no time at all.

- God spoke the commandments to Israel, beginning with "You shall have no other gods before me" (Exodus 20:3).
- The people were so afraid that they told Moses, "do not let God speak to us, lest we die" (Exodus 20:19). Moses became their go-between.

- God gave Moses the tablets, written with His finger. By the time Moses came down, the people were not breaking the “small” commandments. They had already broken the first one. They had made a golden calf.
- Moses “threw the tablets out of his hands and broke them at the foot of the mountain” (Exodus 32:19). Almost a prophetic picture: no matter what, you are going to break this law. You cannot keep it.

ROMANS 8:3 ESV

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

Is the problem the law? No. The law comes from the Lord, and it has value when it is used lawfully. But it cannot do what we want it to do, make us righteous, because it is “weakened by the flesh.” The problem is us. The law arouses our sinful nature and creates a tension: it tells you exactly what to do, and you can’t do it.

That is why Israel’s history reads the way it does. God set a clear choice before them: “I have set before you life and death, blessing and curse. Therefore choose life” (Deuteronomy 30:19). He promised them houses they did not build (Deuteronomy 6:10-11). And they kept choosing death and curse. We look at that and call it foolish. But you do it too.

2. The Letter Kills, but the Spirit Gives Life

Turn to 2 Corinthians 3. In 2 Corinthians, Paul is defending his ministry. The Corinthians were, to say the least, a problem church: Paul told them they were tolerating what was “not tolerated even among pagans” (1 Corinthians 5:1). Teachers had come in questioning Paul’s authority and power, and Paul wrote rather than visit in sorrow (2 Corinthians 2:1-4).

At the start of chapter 3 he asks whether they need letters of recommendation. His answer: “You yourselves are our letter of recommendation” (2 Corinthians 3:2). He doesn’t need statistics or studies. The question is whether the ministry works. Jesus said the same about false teachers: “You will recognize them by their fruits” (Matthew 7:16).

Then, almost as an interruption, one of the most insightful passages in Scripture on grace and the law pours out of him. He writes it because his ministry is the gospel of grace.

2 CORINTHIANS 3:4-6 ESV

⁴ Such is the confidence that we have through Christ toward God. ⁵ Not that we are sufficient in ourselves to claim anything as coming from us, but our sufficiency is from God, ⁶ who has made us sufficient to be ministers of a new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit. For the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.

Paul says he is not sufficient in himself: “our sufficiency is from God” (2 Corinthians 3:5). The more revelation you have of grace, the more you see results in people’s lives and in the church that can’t be explained by anything you

brought. The job of preaching is not to preach well. It is to interrupt people's week so the Holy Spirit can do something. Our qualification isn't us. It is the grace of God.

And Paul ends that thought with the line that sets up the rest of the chapter: "For the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life" (2 Corinthians 3:6). The letter versus the Spirit.

3. The Law Is a Composite Whole

Before we go further, we need to establish what the law is.

Paul calls it "the ministry of death, carved in letters on stone" (2 Corinthians 3:7). Pop quiz: what in the Old Testament was carved on stone? Two tablets, one for each hand. **This is the Ten Commandments.**

The Ten Commandments are the cornerstone of the law. Everything in the Law of Moses, the more than 600 commands, flows from them.

Some teachers divide the law into moral, civil and ceremonial parts. They say the sacrifices and ordinances are gone and the civil law is gone, but the moral law is still binding, so whenever Paul talks about the law, he is not talking about the whole law. But they all flow from the Ten Commandments, and **nothing civil or ceremonial was carved in letters on stone.** What Paul calls the ministry of death is the moral heart of the law itself.

Have the congregation say it: The law is a composite whole.

Why does it matter? Nobody in the room feels condemned because they didn't sacrifice a goat this week or pay taxes to the king of Israel. Condemnation comes from the moral law, the part people insist is still in force. You may lift your hands on Sunday and fool people, but you know the Lord sees everything, and you stay away from Him.

4. Two Ministries

2 CORINTHIANS 3:7-9 ESV

⁷ Now if the ministry of death, carved in letters on stone, came with such glory that the Israelites could not gaze at Moses' face because of its glory, which was being brought to an end, ⁸ will not the ministry of the Spirit have even more glory? ⁹ For if there was glory in the ministry of condemnation, the ministry of righteousness must far exceed it in glory.

Notice two things:

- **The law is called a ministry.** Jesus has a ministry too. There are two ministries here.
- **The law is "the ministry of death" and "the ministry of condemnation."** Jesus' ministry is "the ministry of the Spirit" and "the ministry of righteousness."

Why would God give a law that brings death and condemnation? Because "the law was our guardian until Christ came, in order that we might be justified by faith" (Galatians 3:24).

The law is intended to make you see that you are incapable, so you will look to One who is capable. It is designed to bring you to the end of yourself, so that you go to the One who has no end. The law does exactly what it sounds like: it causes death and brings condemnation.

So while the law makes you feel like you are not good enough, Jesus makes you feel good enough, because He's good enough.

5. Bold, Not Like Moses

2 CORINTHIANS 3:12-18 ESV

¹² Since we have such a hope, we are very bold, ¹³ not like Moses, who would put a veil over his face so that the Israelites might not gaze at the outcome of what was being brought to an end. ¹⁴ But their minds were hardened. For to this day, when they read the old covenant, that same veil remains unlifted, because only through Christ is it taken away. ¹⁵ Yes, to this day whenever Moses is read a veil lies over their hearts. ¹⁶ But when one turns to the Lord, the veil is removed. ¹⁷ Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. ¹⁸ And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.

“Since we have such a hope, we are very bold” (2 Corinthians 3:12).

Illustration: “You’re too much.” A preacher recently wrote to tell Pastor Jason he was too bold, too over the top, and should know his place. He wrote back, “Thank you for the sermon illustration.” When you see the grace of God, it produces boldness. Walk around town like you know Somebody, because you do. This is going to be a bold church.

“Not like Moses, who would put a veil over his face so that the Israelites might not gaze at the outcome of what was being brought to an end” (2 Corinthians 3:13). The NASB calls it a fading glory.

Why does this matter? **We have a natural draw toward the law.** The law demands that we reconcile ourselves to God through the flesh, by self-effort. The flesh is looking for something to do to get right with God, and the law offers it a solution: “If I just do this stuff, I’ll be right with God.”

The law has a glory, but it is fading. It can get someone to the cross. Hard preaching can bring people to salvation, because “the law is not laid down for the just but for the lawless and disobedient” (1 Timothy 1:9).

Illustration: the marshmallow test. Researchers put a marshmallow in front of a child and tell the child not to eat it. You can watch the child straining not to. (Put a mushroom in front of a kid and he’ll wait two days.) After salvation, many believers try to live that way: “Now my job is to forsake sin, live righteously and make God happy.” You can run on the flesh for a while. Then you admit, “As good as it sounds, I can’t do it.” So you either reinterpret Scripture or start living a secret life while acting like you have it together.

Paul saw this happen in Galatia:

- “I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting him who called you in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel” (Galatians 1:6). The different gospel is a gospel of works. Notice the phrase “so quickly.”
- “O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you?” (Galatians 3:1). “Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh?” (Galatians 3:3)

What begins in the Spirit must remain in the Spirit. We don’t get saved by grace through faith and then turn back to the law.

6. Legalism Brings the Veil Back

“Yes, to this day whenever Moses is read a veil lies over their hearts” (2 Corinthians 3:15).

Most preachers don’t preach the law outright. They preach a derivative of it: **legalism**. It keeps the Ten Commandments at its center and then gets down into the granular things, just like the law does. “Don’t smoke, don’t drink, don’t chew, don’t run around with girls who do.” Read your Bible every day. Or the Alabama version, from a roadside sign on I-65: “Go to church or the devil will get you.”

Every time the law, or legalism, is preached, a veil comes back over you. You think it will work, but it doesn’t. You are veiled to the goodness of God and to the power of the gospel.

“But when one turns to the Lord, the veil is removed” (2 Corinthians 3:16). When you look at the finished work of Jesus, you can’t miss the glory of God. His love, His power and His goodness are evident. Covering your face doesn’t work.

7. The Ministry of Reconciliation

There are two ministries in 2 Corinthians 3: the ministry of death and condemnation (Moses, the law) and the ministry of the Spirit, righteousness and life (Jesus, grace). Later in the letter Paul names a third ministry, the one given to gospel preachers and to churches like ours.

2 CORINTHIANS 5:18-19 ESV

¹⁸ All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; ¹⁹ that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation.

Think of it in accounting terms, like reconciling a budget. Our job is to help you reconcile what you owe the law against what has been provided by the Lord. When that reconciling is done, you will see that you cannot live righteously by the law, and that every bit of righteousness you need has been provided at the cross.

Our job is not to preach people into feeling less than, unless it is to point them to the One who is greater: “God is greater than our heart” (1 John 3:20). We point people to Jesus, who is enough, and who, by being enough, makes you enough.

“Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom” (2 Corinthians 3:17). “For freedom Christ has set us free” (Galatians 5:1).

Legalism will take the word freedom and turn it into a demand: “You’re free, brother, so you’ll never sin again. You’ll act right.” (And we usually only apply that to other people.) But Paul says it is freedom for freedom’s sake. Free from what? Sin, condemnation, poverty, sickness. All of it. What do you do with your freedom? Enjoy it, in Jesus Christ.

8. Beholding as in a Mirror

“And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another” (2 Corinthians 3:18).

We are not going to do righteousness by behavior in this church. It doesn’t work.

The NASB 1995 reads “beholding as in a mirror.” The Greek word, *katoptrizō*, means exactly that. It recalls the bronze basin in the tabernacle, made “from the mirrors of the ministering women” (Exodus 38:8). Under the old covenant you looked into it and saw your uncleanness.

Now, with unveiled face, not looking to the law, to legalism, to yourself, or to a church’s membership standards for righteousness, we behold the glory of the Lord. And the glory of the Lord is Jesus.

What Jesus has done is so fully credited to you that when you put your faith in Him, it’s done: everything you need to be right with God, to be in relationship with Him, to receive from Him, including supernatural breakthrough, healing, health and wholeness. “If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation” (2 Corinthians 5:17). You are the righteousness of God in Christ.

Illustration: the bathroom mirror. You get up in the morning, hair a mess, flossing your teeth. What’s looking back at you? The righteousness of God in Christ. “I don’t see myself anymore. I see what God has done through Jesus Christ.”

In a few weeks this series will talk about a grace confession. Affirmations are fine, but stop talking about yourself so much and start talking about Christ in you. He is fully capable where I am fully limited.

Key line: my beholding is impacting my becoming. As I behold Him and His finished work, and who I already am in the spiritual, the physical manifestation of grace comes about.

Conclusion

“For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified” (Hebrews 10:14). I may look a little funky to you, but in the secret place no one says, “Oh, there’s that guy.” I belong there. He calls me by name, and He doesn’t look at me with disappointment. He looks at me as if I were completely obedient, because through Christ I am.

We are not made righteous by the law. We are made righteous by the finished work of Jesus Christ.

Scripture List

Every passage read, cited or alluded to in the message, in the order it comes up.

Read

Read aloud in the message.

ROMANS 5:20

²⁰ Now the law came in to increase the trespass, but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more,

ROMANS 3:21

²¹ But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it—

ROMANS 7:5

⁵ For while we were living in the flesh, our sinful passions, aroused by the law, were at work in our members to bear fruit for death.

ROMANS 8:3

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

2 CORINTHIANS
3:4-6

⁴ Such is the confidence that we have through Christ toward God. ⁵ Not that we are sufficient in ourselves to claim anything as coming from us, but our sufficiency is from God, ⁶ who has made us sufficient to be ministers of a new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit. For the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.

2 CORINTHIANS
3:7-9

⁷ Now if the ministry of death, carved in letters on stone, came with such glory that the Israelites could not gaze at Moses' face because of its glory, which was being brought to an end, ⁸ will not the ministry of the Spirit have even more glory? ⁹ For if there was glory in the ministry of condemnation, the ministry of righteousness must far exceed it in glory.

**2 CORINTHIANS
3:12-18**

¹² Since we have such a hope, we are very bold, ¹³ not like Moses, who would put a veil over his face so that the Israelites might not gaze at the outcome of what was being brought to an end. ¹⁴ But their minds were hardened. For to this day, when they read the old covenant, that same veil remains unlifted, because only through Christ is it taken away. ¹⁵ Yes, to this day whenever Moses is read a veil lies over their hearts. ¹⁶ But when one turns to the Lord, the veil is removed. ¹⁷ Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. ¹⁸ And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.

GALATIANS 1:6

⁶ I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting him who called you in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel—

GALATIANS 3:1-3

¹ O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you? It was before your eyes that Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified. ² Let me ask you only this: Did you receive the Spirit by works of the law or by hearing with faith? ³ Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh?

**2 CORINTHIANS
5:18-19**

¹⁸ All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; ¹⁹ that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation.

Cited

Named or quoted along the way.

MATTHEW 6:9-13

⁹ Pray then like this: “Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. ¹⁰ Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. ¹¹ Give us this day our daily bread, ¹² and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. ¹³ And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

GALATIANS 2:21

²¹ I do not nullify the grace of God, for if righteousness were through the law, then Christ died for no purpose.

EXODUS 20:3

³ “You shall have no other gods before me.

DEUTERONOMY
30:15-19

¹⁵ “See, I have set before you today life and good, death and evil. ¹⁶ If you obey the commandments of the LORD your God that I command you today, by loving the LORD your God, by walking in his ways, and by keeping his commandments and his statutes and his rules, then you shall live and multiply, and the LORD your God will bless you in the land that you are entering to take possession of it. ¹⁷ But if your heart turns away, and you will not hear, but are drawn away to worship other gods and serve them, ¹⁸ I declare to you today, that you shall surely perish. You shall not live long in the land that you are going over the Jordan to enter and possess. ¹⁹ I call heaven and earth to witness against you today, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and curse. Therefore choose life, that you and your offspring may live,

1 CORINTHIANS
5:1

¹ It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and of a kind that is not tolerated even among pagans, for a man has his father’s wife.

MATTHEW 7:16

¹⁶ You will recognize them by their fruits. Are grapes gathered from thornbushes, or figs from thistles?

GALATIANS 3:24

²⁴ So then, the law was our guardian until Christ came, in order that we might be justified by faith.

1 TIMOTHY 1:9

⁹ understanding this, that the law is not laid down for the just but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and sinners, for the unholy and profane, for those who strike their fathers and mothers, for murderers,

1 JOHN 3:20

²⁰ for whenever our heart condemns us, God is greater than our heart, and he knows everything.

GALATIANS 5:1

¹ For freedom Christ has set us free; stand firm therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery.

2 CORINTHIANS
5:17

¹⁷ Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.

HEBREWS 10:14

¹⁴ For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified.

Alluded to

Drawn on without naming the reference.

ROMANS 5:12-14

¹² Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned—¹³ for sin indeed was in the world before the law was given, but sin is not counted where there is no law. ¹⁴ Yet death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those whose sinning was not like the transgression of Adam, who was a type of the one who was to come.

EXODUS 20:18-21

¹⁸ Now when all the people saw the thunder and the flashes of lightning and the sound of the trumpet and the mountain smoking, the people were afraid and trembled, and they stood far off ¹⁹ and said to Moses, “You speak to us, and we will listen; but do not let God speak to us, lest we die.” ²⁰ Moses said to the people, “Do not fear, for God has come to test you, that the fear of him may be before you, that you may not sin.” ²¹ The people stood far off, while Moses drew near to the thick darkness where God was.

EXODUS 32:15-19

¹⁵ Then Moses turned and went down from the mountain with the two tablets of the testimony in his hand, tablets that were written on both sides; on the front and on the back they were written. ¹⁶ The tablets were the work of God, and the writing was the writing of God, engraved on the tablets. ¹⁷ When Joshua heard the noise of the people as they shouted, he said to Moses, “There is a noise of war in the camp.” ¹⁸ But he said, “It is not the sound of shouting for victory, or the sound of the cry of defeat, but the sound of singing that I hear.” ¹⁹ And as soon as he came near the camp and saw the calf and the dancing, Moses’ anger burned hot, and he threw the tablets out of his hands and broke them at the foot of the mountain.

DEUTERONOMY
6:10-11

¹⁰ “And when the LORD your God brings you into the land that he swore to your fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give you—with great and good cities that you did not build, ¹¹ and houses full of all good things that you did not fill, and cisterns that you did not dig, and vineyards and olive trees that you did not plant—and when you eat and are full,

2 CORINTHIANS
2:1-4

¹ For I made up my mind not to make another painful visit to you. ² For if I cause you pain, who is there to make me glad but the one whom I have pained? ³ And I wrote as I did, so that when I came I might not suffer pain from those who should have made me rejoice, for I felt sure of all of you, that my joy would be the joy of you all. ⁴ For I wrote to you out of much affliction and anguish of heart and with many tears, not to cause you pain but to let you know the abundant love that I have for you.

**2 CORINTHIANS
3:1-3**

¹ Are we beginning to commend ourselves again? Or do we need, as some do, letters of recommendation to you, or from you? ² You yourselves are our letter of recommendation, written on our hearts, to be known and read by all. ³ And you show that you are a letter from Christ delivered by us, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts.

**EXODUS 34:33-
35**

³³ And when Moses had finished speaking with them, he put a veil over his face.
³⁴ Whenever Moses went in before the LORD to speak with him, he would remove the veil, until he came out. And when he came out and told the people of Israel what he was commanded, ³⁵ the people of Israel would see the face of Moses, that the skin of Moses' face was shining. And Moses would put the veil over his face again, until he went in to speak with him.

EXODUS 38:8

⁸ He made the basin of bronze and its stand of bronze, from the mirrors of the ministering women who ministered in the entrance of the tent of meeting.

ABOUT THE PREACHER



Pastor Jason Mayfield

SENIOR PASTOR, CITYLIGHT CHURCH

Pastor Jason Mayfield is the Senior Pastor of Citylight Church in Saraland, Alabama, where he and his wife, Ashleigh, lead a church devoted to Building Lives on Jesus. His preaching is rooted in the Bible, full of hope, and grounded in one conviction: an incredible life is built on the finished work of Jesus Christ.

For more than 20 years, Pastor Jason has given his life to the local church. He has been credentialed with the Assemblies of God for 21 years and ordained for 14, and he has led revitalization in churches that went on to rank among the Top 100 Fastest-Growing Churches in America. He carries a deep conviction that the church can be both excellent and supernatural, and a passion for revival.

He is an author and the creator of Tear Up Your Bible and POWER 27, a daily rhythm of Bible reading, prayer and worship. His resources have helped more than 100,000 people go deeper in the Scriptures. Above every title, his greatest joy is seeing people meet Jesus, be filled with the Spirit, and grow into everything God has called them to be.

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