

What About the Law?

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[0 : 00] Well, before I jump into the passage, I want to remind you, we sang nothing but the blood of Jesus. and I want to remind you of something that is true and important for you and I to understand.

And that is a reminder from Hebrews chapter 9, verse 22. It says, according to the law, almost everything is purified with blood. And without the shedding of blood, there is no forgiveness. There is no forgiveness without the shedding of blood. Jesus Christ has bought our redemption through his shed blood on the cross.

That will set the scene for us as we begin to look again at Matthew chapter 5, verse 17 through 20. I mentioned before this might be a longer sermon. I hope that's okay with you.

I want you to understand that the reason that I said that is because this is one of the most controversial passages in all of Scripture. It's one of the most challenging passages for us when we come across it in our personal study.

[1 : 00] And it's incredibly challenging to preach. Let me just tell you. It's a very difficult passage of Scripture. But this is part of the reason why I like line-by-line, verse-by-verse preaching. I don't get to skip over the hard stuff.

And that's why I like line-by-line, verse-by-verse Bible study at home. It's because you don't get to skip over the hard stuff either. These are the types of things that we need to wrestle with. And we can walk away with confidence and assurity because this word spoken by Christ 2,000 years ago is alive today.

And the Spirit of God speaks to us through it. Let me read the passage again. Matthew 5, 17 through 20 says, Don't think that I came to abolish the law or the prophets.

I did not come to abolish, but to fulfill. For truly I tell you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or one stroke of a letter, or if you have the King James, not one jot or tittle, will pass away from the law until all things are accomplished.

Therefore whoever breaks one of the least of these commands and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven. But whoever does and teaches these commands will be called great in the kingdom of heaven.

[2 : 16] For I tell you, unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and the Pharisees, you will never get into the kingdom of heaven. Listen, I want you to understand that that verse right there, verse 20, is the key verse for us as we look at this passage.

The question that Jesus is addressing is about righteousness, specifically the righteousness required to enter his kingdom.

And the standard that Jesus gives is the righteousness that surpasses that of the scribes and the Pharisees. I want to explain to you who these groups of people are.

I'm sure you're somewhat familiar, maybe you're very familiar with who the scribes and the Pharisees are from Scripture, but let me explain just a little bit to you. In the time of Christ, there were three groups of leaders for the Jewish people.

You had the Sadducees, the scribes, and the Pharisees. These were the three groups of the religious leaders. The Sadducees were like the social elite. They were wealthy.

[3 : 20] They were well off. They only believed in the first five books of the Old Testament, the Torah. They only accepted the Torah. And because there's no resurrection from the dead, there's no promise of a kingdom to come or eternal life or anything like that, in the first five books directly stated, the Sadducees did not believe in the resurrection from the dead or in eternal life or anything like that.

So it's been said a lot of times that they didn't believe in the resurrection, and that made them sad, you see? I love cheesy jokes, guys. Okay.

That's the Sadducees. Jesus didn't mention them here. Why? Well, because the people that Jesus was speaking to, not only his disciples, but also the crowd who was there listening to his words, that crowd was much more familiar with the scribes and the Pharisees.

The scribes were the legal experts of the day. Okay. The scribes were those people who had been trained to teach the law of God. And it wasn't just that they were trained to teach the law of God. They also were trained to interpret the law of God and the entirety of the Old Testament scripture in light of the tradition that had been passed down from generation to generation.

[4 : 31] Okay. That was the scribes. That was their job. They were professional teachers of the law. Then you have the Pharisees. Now, I think that when we picture Pharisees, often we'll think about them like this is their job, like this is their entire life, this is their livelihood, is going around and messing with Jesus.

No, I'm just kidding. But the Pharisees were laymen. They were men who this was their hobby, more or less, was studying the law. They had a zeal for God's word.

They were devoted not only to God's word, but also to the tradition of the elders. They were committed to living faithfully and obediently according to the law.

So I've mentioned a couple times the tradition of the elders. That's really important because here's what happened. At some point, right after the exile, during the second exile to Babylon, after that they came back to Israel and the people made a commitment to never let that happen again.

Okay. And the way that they would avoid that was by living as closely to the law as possible, not disobeying God again because they saw the punishment, which was the exile.

[5 : 41] And so out of that, sometime during the intertestamental period, came the scribes who taught and interpreted the word of God for the people and taught them how to live according to it.

This was the tradition that was formed. And out of that tradition came this group called the Pharisees. Okay. That's where the Pharisees came from. Actually, one thing, there was two groups that came out of that scribal teaching time, the Essenes and the Pharisees.

Both were very strict adherents to the law of God, but they did it in different ways. The Essenes were a group of men and women who literally left the rest of the Jewish people into smaller communities.

They separated themselves completely and just lived faithfully according to the law. This is where, if you're familiar, have you ever heard of the Dead Sea Scrolls? Dead Sea Scrolls? Okay. Found in 1948, I believe.

The Dead Sea Scrolls were found in Qumran, and Qumran was an Essene community. Okay. This is where they, one of the communities they went to. But the Pharisees were the other group, and they were a lot more public.

[6 : 43] They stayed with the Jewish people, and they didn't just live according to the laws, but they felt it was their job to make sure that everyone else did too. And it wasn't just that they wanted to make sure they lived according to the laws, but that everyone was living according to the tradition of the elders.

Okay? So, you have to understand that to realize the context that Jesus is speaking into. When he here, in verse 20, says, if you want to enter the kingdom of heaven, you have to be more righteous than the scribes and the Pharisees, he was telling the people that he was speaking to that you have to be more righteous than those men who look more righteous than anyone who's ever walked the earth.

Because that was the commitment of the scribes and the Pharisees. Listen, there were, in the Pharisees' estimation, 613 laws in the Old Testament.

613, well, specifically in the Torah. Of those were 248 positive commands, meaning you shall do X, Y, or Z. And then 365 negative commands, you shall not do X, Y, or Z.

Okay? Okay? 613 of them. And they were meticulous to try to follow each of them, or as many as they could. So, they had a lot of laws, and they had the tradition of the elders.

[8 : 06] Now, the tradition of the elders, again, it almost seems like it came from a good place. Like, trying to help make sure, that the scribes were trying to help make sure that the people didn't fall back into sin and disobey the law of God.

So, they would put up what they called fences, or boundaries, around the laws. So, they would extend the coverage of the law. Now, this is a couple things.

One, it made it very, very difficult to accurately follow the law of God. And two, simultaneously, this is going to sound a little bit counterintuitive, but at the same time, it made it easier to get away with cheating the law of God.

Because you could feel really good about your adherence to the tradition of the elders, even though you were kind of bypassing the heart of God or the law of God. And that's the issue that Jesus is speaking into here in this Matthew chapter 5 context.

But I want to give you some examples of the way that they put up these fences. So, one comes from Sabbath laws. You're familiar with the fourth commandment? Remember the Sabbath day and keep it holy.

[9:09] It says in Exodus chapter 20, verses 8 through 11, basically, don't work on this day. That's what it said. Well, then, in that intertestamental period, this fear came up.

Well, what constitutes work? And so, they put up these boundaries. And the way that they fixed this fear of what is work, and the way that they made sure that they would never fall guilty of sin in this regard, was they built out 39, 39 rules of labor.

39 groups or rules of labor. Okay? And so, or I should say categories of labor. And that was to protect the people from accidentally falling into sin.

Let me give you an example of what some of these looked like. Okay? A tailor, a person who, you know, works on clothes, was not allowed to keep a needle in their clothes on Friday night because if they accidentally walked around with a needle in their clothes on the Sabbath, that would have been considered carrying a burden because you were carrying what you worked with.

A needle. Like, we're talking about like a seam needle? Okay. A sewing needle? So, that was, seriously, that was one of the fences that they put up for the Sabbath law. Another one was, this one's kind of funny, a new lamp.

[10:29] If you bought a new lamp and you put it in your house, you could move it around your house, you know, try it out in different places on the Sabbath day. But if you had an old lamp in your house, you could not move that on the Sabbath or it was considered work.

This was, seriously, this was part of the protections that they put in place. There were other things they did. If you were to take a grain from the field and, you know, work it in your hands so you could eat it, they considered that threshing and so it was labor on the Sabbath.

This is why when Jesus and his disciples were walking through the field and his disciples were eating the heads of grain, the Pharisees said that they broke the Sabbath and Jesus was like, they did no such thing. You guys misunderstood what the Sabbath is.

It's not about all of these minuscule, you know, things. It's about not working. It's about resting and trusting the Lord and honoring that day as holy because that's what God did. So they had all of these rules in place, you know, a certain number of steps on the Sabbath, all those types of things to protect themselves and others from breaking the Sabbath or breaking the law of God.

Another one, this is really interesting, in Exodus 23, 19, you find one of the most interesting laws in the Old Testament in my humble opinion. It says, bring the best of the first fruits of your land to the house of the Lord your God.

[11:40] You must not boil a young goat in its mother's milk. Have you heard that one before? Okay. That was probably a law prohibiting a pagan fertility practice.

Just so you know, that's kind of what, there's a ton of opinions on it, but that's what I think makes the most sense is that probably God was prohibiting a pagan fertility practice. All right? It was a prohibition, clearly, on cooking, cooking a baby goat in its mother's milk.

Okay? Which sounds very odd anyways, but listen. Here's the fear that developed out of this because they wanted to follow the law to a T. All right? So here was the fear. The fear was, what if while I'm cooking stew, milk splashes into the pot?

Am I breaking that law? Have I cooked this goat in this mother's milk? Or this, it even went further, okay? This was, what if after I eat the meat, I drink a glass of milk and they mix in my stomach?

This is serious. I'm not joking. Like, this was their, this is how they, and so this was a fear, right? It almost sounds like OCD a little bit, but anyways, there was a fear about like, what are we gonna do? What are we gonna do? So what they did was they, they enacted a total ban on eating meat and dairy at the, and having dairy at the same time.

[12 : 53] Actually, eventually it became required that they had separate dishes and they had separate sinks to wash them in and they had to have a certain time of waiting between meals so that they didn't have meat and dairy in their stomach at the same time.

I mean, they were serious about this. There's one other practice I'll mention real quick and that is, has to do with the purity laws. You remember in Numbers chapter 19, I'm sure everyone, that's your favorite chapter of scripture. The person who touches any human corpse will be unclean for seven days.

So the law is pretty clear, don't touch a human corpse, right? That's impure. If you touch a human corpse and you go into the temple, Numbers 19 breaks this down, you're unclean when you enter the temple to worship. So do you know what they did to protect this one because they were concerned?

They were worried that if people were walking in, traveling into Jerusalem for a festival, walked over an unmarked grave, that they would be unclean because they walked over a grave, a tomb, you know, with a dead body in it.

So if they walk over that and then come into the temple, then they're unclean and that's sin on the temple and all these different things, big problem for them. So what they started was this practice of whitewashing the tombs where they would use lime every spring.

[14 : 01] This was written into the rules, it was written into the regulations, the tradition of the elders that every spring they would whitewash the tombs, the gravestones, with lime.

So what happened was these tombs would become like super, super white and clean and actually became a marker of beauty. It was like a status thing in some ways. And so they had these beautiful markers but the reason they did it was so that people wouldn't accidentally walk over a corpse.

They even extended this into what's called the tent law which says that the air inside any place that a roof is covering is considered impure. So if you were in the building with a dead body then you were impure for seven days.

They extended it so, so far and it became very heavy handed. By the time of Christ these Pharisees had their ways worked out where they could impose the laws and the regulations onto the common people who didn't have a great comprehension of the law and they themselves could skirt around different things that they wanted to do.

One of the ways they would do that was they would dedicate their money and their home to the Lord because once they made a binding oath to the Lord for their property they couldn't use that to help their parents so they wouldn't buy their parents medicine and they wouldn't take their parents in.

[15 : 13] So in order to circumvent honor your father and mother they made a binding oath with the Lord. So they knew all of these little loopholes that they had created and Jesus is here calling this out because here's the deal all of those things that I just mentioned all of those and literally a thousand more were examples of why the people thought the Pharisees and the scribes really had it figured out.

They knew all the rules and they lived really, really righteous lives by all appearance. I think many of us in the church we know how to live the right life.

Right? We know what it looks like to do the right thing. We know what it looks like to be in church every Sunday have the answer in Sunday school every now and then so people think that you really know your stuff.

You know, encourage people the right way. We know the words to say. The question that we have to think about as we look at this passage and we'll look at the whole thing don't worry but the question we have to think about is do we try to live this pharisaical righteousness that's external only or is there an internal righteousness?

That's the difference that Jesus is making here. The difference that Jesus is drawing out is the righteousness that surpasses the scribes and the Pharisees is a righteousness that's internal more than it is external or as much as it is external at the very least.

[16 : 46] But let's look at the rest of the passage. That was a long introduction on verse 20. I won't conclude there that long so that's good, right? Okay.

You guys aren't laughing very much yet. We'll get there. We'll get there. Let's talk about Christ in the Old Testament here in verses 17 and 18. Verse 17 says, don't think that I came to abolish the law

or the prophets I did not come to abolish but to fulfill.

I want you to understand something about Jesus from the very outset of this passage. First and foremost, Jesus had a high view of scripture. Jesus had a very high view of scripture. God's word was and is and will be God's word.

Jesus did not do anything to disregard or to take away from the fact that this is God's word. He makes it very clear. I did not come to abolish the law. In fact, he says, do not even think that I came to abolish the law.

So whether or not Jesus was addressing a question that had been asked about his authoritative style of teaching or if Jesus was anticipating questions that might come based on what he was about to go into here in this sermon, regardless, the starting point is that Jesus has a very high view of scripture.

[17:55] Alright? I think sometimes what happens in the church, especially because we are New Testament Christians, is that we fall victim to the mindset that the New Testament matters for us and the Old Testament does not.

That is not the case. 2 Timothy 3.16 says, All scripture is God-breathed or inspired by God and is profitable for teaching and rebuking and for training in righteousness.

All scripture. Trivia question. You can answer. When someone in the New Testament makes a reference to scripture, what are they referring to?

The Old Testament. All scripture is God-breathed. The entire Old Testament is God-breathed. It's inspired by God and it's profitable for us.

We can see the prophet even in Matthew chapter 4. We've talked about this already, but when Jesus was tempted by the devil in the wilderness, how did he respond to the devil's temptation? He quoted scripture.

[18:56] He quoted from Deuteronomy, right? So Jesus had a very high view of scripture and we should too. Okay, we have to, I think sometimes we need to be reminded and encouraged to rekindle the flame of love for God's word in our hearts.

We should pursue God through his word. We should seek his face. We should have the heart of the psalmist in Psalm 119 who cried out, I love your law, God.

It is my meditation day and night. Christ had a high view of scripture and we should too. Number two, Christ is the fulfillment of scripture.

He did not come to abolish the law and the prophets. Law and the prophets, real quick, just so you know. That was like shorthand for all of the Old Testament, just so we're all on the same page. I did not come to abolish but to fulfill.

This word fulfill means to bring it to its proper conclusion or its proper end. Everything in the Old Testament points ahead to its proper end in Jesus Christ, both in his first coming and there are things in the Old Testament that point ahead to even his second coming.

[20:04] Okay? So, all scripture points to Jesus. He is the fulfillment of it. Now, how did Jesus fulfill the Old Testament? There's three ways that I want you to understand Jesus fulfilled the Old Testament scripture.

First, he fulfilled the Old Testament in his obedient life. Jesus perfectly lived out the entire law of God from Genesis to Malachi. He perfectly obeyed the law of God.

It wasn't just through his actions though. Jesus also perfectly obeyed the law of God in his thoughts and in his heart. His heart posture towards God was a love for God and a desire to live out his word. Not some sort of external righteousness that's for show only. Jesus perfectly obeyed the law of God not only by the letter but also by the Spirit.

Jesus also fulfilled the messianic prophecy. Jesus is the fulfillment of all prophetic utterance that points ahead to the Messiah. Alright? Matthew 14 times throughout his gospel points to the reason that Jesus did something being that he was fulfilling what the prophet had spoken.

[21:18] We've already seen this a couple of times. We saw it at the birth of Jesus. This was to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet Isaiah. Isaiah chapter 7 about the virgin birth and all those things about the passage from Hosea out of Egypt I have called my son.

Jesus' flight to Egypt and life back in Israel was to fulfill what was spoken by the prophets. This happened throughout the New Testament. Jesus is the fulfillment of prophecy.

Right? Like in that way Jesus fulfilled he fulfilled the law he fulfilled the prophets but I also want you to see Jesus fulfilled the entirety of the Old Testament. Everything points to Jesus.

The redemptive arc of history described displayed in the Old Testament points ahead to the redemption that's available in Christ Jesus. The types and figures the things that point ahead to this figure that's better it's all fulfilled in Jesus.

Read the book of Hebrews. Okay? Hebrews 1-10 Jesus is better than people Jesus is better than angels Jesus is better than Moses Jesus is better than the sacrificial system Jesus is better than the high priest Jesus is better Everything in the Old Testament points ahead to him.

[22 : 32] So in every way Jesus fulfilled the Old Testament He is the new and better Israel right? 40 days Jesus was in the wilderness without food He was tempted by the devil and He never succumbed to temptation Alright?

The Israelites were in the wilderness for 40 years and they wandered around like you know without a clue of what was going on because they kept falling into temptation Jesus is better Jesus is the promised seed of the woman who would the son of the woman who would crush the head of the serpent in Genesis chapter 3 verse 15 Jesus is the promised seed of Abraham who would bless all of the nations on earth right?

Jesus is the fulfillment of all of the promises of the Old Testament Jesus is He describes Himself as the serpent in the wilderness when the fiery snakes were going through the camp of Israel and were biting the people and they were dying God told Moses Moses build a bronze serpent hang it on a standard and raise it up and whenever anyone looks at that serpent they'll be healed from the bite of the vipers Jesus says to Nicodemus in John chapter 3 just as the serpent in the wilderness was lifted up so the son of man must be lifted up the picture there is Jesus on the cross is the one we look to to save us from the bite of sin Jesus is the prophet that was promised in Deuteronomy chapter 18 Jesus is the son of David who was promised for an eternal kingdom in 2 Samuel chapter 7 look Jesus is the fulfillment of the Old Testament we have to be careful not to be so like limited in what we mean when Jesus says fulfilled

Jesus didn't come to fulfill some of the Old Testament some of the laws some of the prophets He came to fulfill all of it Jesus is the fulfillment of Scripture I also want you to see that Jesus upholds the value of Scripture Jesus upholds the value of Scripture that includes the Old Testament verse 18 for truly I tell you until heaven and earth pass away not the smallest letter or one stroke of a letter will pass away from the law until all things are accomplished this is that verse that gives us a lot of trouble what do you mean nothing is going to pass away not the smallest letter not the smallest stroke of a letter in Greek the smallest letter is iota in Hebrew the smallest letter is a yode a yode is about the size of a comma but it's flipped upside down it's at the top of the letters instead of at the bottom that's a yode it's a very small letter or the smallest stroke of a letter think about the way that we cross our t's right when we cross our t's it makes it a clear difference between a t and an l right we cross our i's it makes them a discernible difference between an i and an l or we put the second mark on the bottom of the i it makes a difference between the t right so here's the deal that small detail in Jesus's mind matters nothing is passing away nothing has passed away nothing will pass away so the question that we have to answer is what does this mean for us since Jesus didn't come to abolish the law or to do away with the law he came to fulfill it what is our relationship with the law as Christians as New Testament Christians are we supposed to be living under the old testament law because guys if that's the case I promise you we are in bad shape I mean I'm just telling you did anybody have shrimp this week anybody you had some shrimp this week broke the law broke the law anybody wearing mixed fabrics okay we have broken the law of God look I'm not trying to make light of the law of God my point is we fail we have failed we've lied we've stolen right we've done these things that go against the law of God we have broken the law so if we're supposed to live out that law perfectly for salvation then we are in big trouble we are in big trouble so what does Jesus mean I want you to understand that he cannot be saying that the law still applies the same way that it did why can't he say that because in other places Jesus said otherwise in Mark chapter 7 Jesus has a conversation with the Pharisees where he talks about what comes out of a person's mouth is what defiles them not what goes into the person's mouth remember that because out of the mouth comes hatred and evil thoughts and adulterous thoughts and all of these different things Jesus makes a very clear point and then in Mark's gospel you'll notice go to Mark chapter 7 you'll see it there's a parenthetical statement it says in saying these things he declared all food clean that parenthetical was original to the text by the way Mark is telling us what Jesus meant so how can Jesus declare all foods clean and then say that the law applies the exact same way he can't doesn't make any sense now consider that and extrapolate it through the rest of the new

testament and you find we have a real problem because there is a lot that paul had to say about the separation between us and the law so what is jesus saying here listen what jesus is telling us is that the law of god the entire old testament is still the authoritative word of god it's not a question of the validity of the law it's a question of the application of the law or the administration of the law in other words we are not held to the same standard of living the law

perfectly if we are in christ but i want you to see that if we are not in christ the law still matters because the law shows us how far we are from god how sinful we are paul says in romans chapter 3 that without the law he wouldn't have known what it was to covet right the law shows us the heart of god the holiness of god the righteous standard of god and makes it very very clear to us that we fall short of that standard we cannot reach god's holy standard so that's what that's what is meant here the entirety of the old testament is still there it still matters it's still valid it's applied differently to the believer so again it's a question of application of the law so then let's consider this a little bit further with this idea of christians in the old testament okay so what does the law mean for us verse 19 therefore whoever breaks one of the least of these commands and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven but whoever does and teaches these commands will be called great in the kingdom of heaven the main point that jesus is making here is that god has called us to be people who obey his word god has called his people throughout generations whether it's the israelites or the church god has called his people to a life of obedience and submission to his word i want to be clear this is not for salvation jesus is not making a point about salvation here salvation is by grace through faith in jesus christ okay so for those who have repented of their sin and believed in jesus christ the law in some measure still requires our obedience i want to be careful with saying that because i don't want that to be too confusing i don't mean that you have to take your goat or your calf or anything to israel to uh to offer sacrifices matter of fact you can't because the temple does not stand anymore okay so you cannot go and bring your sacrifices there to israel anyways um you're not required to eat uh kosher diet according to the old testament scriptures and we know that because of what happened in acts chapter 10 you remember peter is about to visit cornelius and share the gospel with him cornelius was a gentile before he goes god gives him a vision and in that vision the sheet comes down from heaven and it's got all sorts of animals that are unclean and impure on it and the lord says to peter get up peter kill and eat all right so then peter goes into the home of an unclean gentile shares the gospel with him the holy spirit comes salvation occurs it's a beautiful picture and then from there in acts chapter 15 there's the jerusalem council where the church fathers the leaders of the church get together and they talk about how are we supposed to apply the law to the gentiles what are we supposed to do with this and they make it very clear that circumcision and other aspects of the law do not apply for salvation i want to be clear the law following the law for the christian is not a matter of salvation and there are aspects of the law that have been completed and fulfilled in christ specifically the sacrificial system is completed and fulfilled in christ in hebrews chapter 8 verse 13 the author of hebrews says that the old covenant is obsolete obsolete all right the old covenant the sacrificial system of the old covenant is obsolete because the new covenant exists that's hebrews 8 13 i think about obsolete like you remember i don't know you probably know what i'm talking about but cell phones after a period of time they'll start slowing down you know you keep doing the updates on them they start slowing down that's built in obsolescence it's designed obsolescence they are designed that after a certain number of updates they'll slow down so that you'll go and buy a new and better phone did you know that anybody refuse to buy a new and better phone i love that yeah i love that look the old

[32 : 14] testament had an expiration date the old covenant had an expiration date the sacrificial system had an expiration date it was sufficient until something better came jesus is the best sacrifice he is the complete sacrifice his blood is effective for all sinners there is no need to continuously offer sacrifices to god so in that way the old covenant is obsolete again the food laws the dietary restrictions these things have gone away because christ declared them clean but still there is there are aspects of the law that we do obey and that would be the moral aspects of the law things that transcend culture and context or setting the situation that the people are in those things that transcend we still are called to obey and most often what you find is that those things those commands those moral commands of god the ethical commands of god that transcend are repeated in the new testament so don't murder don't lie don't steal you know those moral things that we're called to as believers those are repeated in the new testament and in fact the it's actually a deeper level of respect for those laws jesus is going to explain here in the rest of matthew chapter 5

murder isn't just killing someone it's hating them in your heart it's calling them names it's hurling insults adultery isn't just a physical act it's lust jesus makes it very clear that for his followers for kingdom citizens the way that we obey the law is not by the letter like the pharisees were doing it is in the spirit the way that jesus did and the way that jesus calls us to the point is we are called to obedience as christ followers because of what is called sanctification it's not about salvation that's being justified being made righteous declared righteous to stand clean in the presence of god that's justification that happens when you repent of your sin and believe in jesus but there is a process called sanctification and in that process of sanctification god is refining us and making us more like his son making us more holy and in our obedience we are sanctified so jesus makes it very clear that the law in some sense absolutely still matters still matters for us this is why later in this chapter jesus is able to say matthew 5 48 be perfect therefore as your heavenly father is perfect that's the command of jesus that's the expectation of kingdom citizens is perfection it's because god still calls us to obedience now the other thing that i want you to understand as christians regarding christians in the old testament is that we should also rest in christ's fulfillment so as i mentioned there are parts of the law that are fulfilled there are parts of the law that are fulfilled for us in fact romans chapter 8 verses 1 through 4 says therefore there is now no condemnation for those in christ jesus because the law of the spirit of life in christ jesus has set you free from the law of sin and death for what the law could not do since it was weakened by the flesh god did he condemn sin in the flesh by sending his own son in the likeness of sinful flesh as a sin offering in order that the law's requirement would be fulfilled in us fulfilled in us that's romans 8 4 who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the spirit listen this means we do not have to know and follow all 613 laws from the torah we do not have to know and follow all of the regulations or prohibitions put on people by the tradition of the elders we can rest in the completed fulfilled work of the lord jesus christ and we can live lives of obedience

two parts that we're called to third we have to view the old testament in light of the new testament galatians chapter 3 verses 24 through 26 says the law then was our guardian until christ so that we could be justified by faith but since that faith has come we are no longer under a guardian or a tutor for through faith you are all sons of god in christ jesus there is a freedom from the law if you are in christ then the law is not what condemns you anymore if you are in christ you are freed from the law because christ perfectly accomplished it instead of living under the law or the old covenant we live under grace in the new covenant we live under the grace of god by faith in christ so we view the old testament in a very high with a very high view with passion we trust the words that god delivered and revealed we look to the old testament to understand the nature and the character and the holiness of god we pursue his righteousness and the ways that he has called his people to pursue his righteousness throughout all of the generations we live lives according to scripture that's the call for the christian that's how we think about the old testament and so the the the point that jesus makes here when he says whoever breaks one of the least of these commands and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven but whoever does and teaches these commands will be called great in the kingdom of heaven this is not a point that jesus is not making a point about your status in heaven based on the based on your obedience to the old testament law what he's saying here is if you are faithful in him if you believe in jesus and you live according to the law of god right the moral code that god has given to all of us obedience does matter there is blessing and reward in heaven at the end based on your obedience to the law of god second corinthians talks about this when we stand before the judgment seat of christ and we are given blessings based on our obedience first corinthians four talks about how god is going to work through the ministries and see what stands and what doesn't what was made of gold and silver and what was made of straw and wood it's going to burn up and go away it's going to be useless the point that i'm making in the point that jesus is making is obedience absolutely matters our obedience to god absolutely matters not only here on earth and the way that we live out our faith but also in eternity and the way that we experience our joy in heaven that's the point that jesus is making for us here that's how we as christians should view the old testament so we don't have to listen to and apply every single law of the old testament we don't have to offer sacrifices that's been accomplished we don't have to eat uh ritually pure food that's been accomplished that's been declared clean but there are still things in the law that matter for us we should approach god with a heart of reverence and worship we should come to worship with clean hands all right not not necessarily physically hopefully physically clean guys hopefully you're washing your hands okay um

i'm looking at some of you and i don't know i'm just kidding that was mean i'm sorry uh hopefully we're coming with clean hands but really we should come with with spiritually with clean hands and a pure heart that our relationships with others and our relationship with god is right when we come into his presence to worship we should value the gathering of the saints the same way that the the the jews the jews of old valued their time in the temple together right we should anticipate experiencing the presence of god the same way that the jews experienced the temple or the presence of god in the temple when they came to worship we should look to jesus with hope and gladness and thanksgiving counting our blessings wherever jonathan is because jesus christ is the perfect sacrifice the atoning sacrifice that is required to pay for our sins i told you it was going to be a long sermon but look i want to remind you again though of matthew 5 20 it says for i tell you unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and pharisees you will never get into the kingdom of heaven listen the call for the christian the call for the kingdom citizen is to live under the authority of the king of our kingdom we listen and live under the edict of the king the king is jesus himself and jesus says here that unless your righteousness surpasses the scribes and the pharisees righteousness then you can't even get into the kingdom of heaven look if you and i want to be more righteous than the scribes and pharisees there is exactly one way we can go about that it is if we possess a righteousness that is not our own martin luther calls it an alien righteousness we need a righteousness that comes from someone else and is given to us and my friends that is only available by repenting of your sin and believing in jesus christ jesus christ who perfectly fulfilled the old testament offers his righteousness to you which far and away surpasses the righteousness of the scribes and the pharisees he offers it to you freely if you would repent of your sin and believe in him so listen there's a few responses that i think are necessary to a passage like this the first that i want to remind you of is if you are a christian if you are a church member i'll say if you're a church member if you've been in the church for a long time i want to remind you of the danger of playing the game of the pharisees don't play the game that the pharisees played so the pharisees were able to trick everyone around them but when jesus was on the scene he made it very clear that they did not trick god at all too often people play the game of the pharisees we look great on the outside we're at church every sunday we know the words to say but inside like jesus described the pharisees matthew chapter 23 verses 27 and 28 jesus says that the pharisees were like those whitewashed tombs that i mentioned that outside they look beautiful they're great but on the inside they're filled with dead man's bones filled with hypocrisy and deceit too often we play the game of the pharisees so if you are a church goer then this passage calls you to a place of i think humble examination of your heart of your motives of your thoughts of your words this passage absolutely calls you to a place of examining where you stand with god are you counting on being right with god because you've done the right things or are you certain of your standing before god because of the righteousness of jesus so don't play the game of the pharisees and then secondly if you are not in christ i want you to understand that apart from him and apart from his righteousness there is no relationship with god there is no salvation there is only judgment that awaits eternal judgment separated from god that's not meant to scare you that's a fact so if you have never put your faith in jesus then seek him for his righteousness today seek him and ask him to forgive you of your sins and trust him for that forgiveness and for salvation repent and believe in the lord jesus christ the same lord jesus who spoke these words two thousand years ago said stands alive in heaven ready to save you from your sins if you would but repent and believe the result of this changed life and the result of self-examination in this way is a life of obedience to the law and the word of god but it's not for the sake of legalism or the sake of external righteousness it's out of a love and passion for him and his word so i'm going to ask you to do something if you stand as we sing a closing song i want you to ask god to do something for you ask god to do something for you i'm going to read from psalm 139 verses 23 and 24 and what i'm going to ask you to do is close your eyes listen to the words that i'm about to say and if you need to open your eyes we'll have the verses on the screen but listen pray the prayer of the psalmist in 139 verses 23 and 24 search me god and know my heart test me and know my concerns see if there is any offensive or sinful way in me lead me in the everlasting way this is a humble prayer it is a challenging prayer and be prepared for god to reveal the sin that is hidden in your hearts and then respond as the lord leads if you want to come up and pray come up and pray if you need to give your life to christ and come and and talk with me and let's pray and let's pray together lord jesus we love you and praise you we thank you for who you are we thank you for your salvation and your righteousness god thank you for this word thank you for the reminder of your holiness and your perfection and your standard that you've

delivered and revealed to us through the old testament thank you for the call to obedience that you remind us of here in the new we love you jesus and pray your blessings over this time now it's in jesus name that i pray amen you