

The Coming of the Law

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- [0 : 00] Welcome to our services today and as we gather together around the Word of God, let us seek his blessing upon his Word. Let us pray.
- Eternal and ever-blessed Lord, grant to us that we would come to understand the great privilege that is ours when we are gathered together around thine own Word.
- And we pray, O Lord, that through thy own Spirit, that thy Word would become a living Word for us.
- We give thee thanks, O Lord, that we have the privilege of entering into the very throne room of God and to lay down our petitions before thee.
- And that we can do so with boldness and with confidence in and through the merits of thine own Son. For we confess, O Lord, that we have no merits of our own that we can bring before thee as we come to acknowledge our sinnership.
- [1 : 24] That we sin daily in thought, in word and in deed. Grant to us, O Lord, that we would come to understand the depth of sin.
- That we would come to understand the power of sin. And to remember how sin can be so deceiving.
- O Lord, we pray that we would come to see our great need of the provision that thou hast made for us through thy Son.
- As a fountain that has been opened for sin and for uncleanness. Grant to us, O Lord, that we would draw near to that fountain today.
- And that we would draw from that fountain by faith. And receive the cleansing that we stand in need of. O Lord, we are thankful that thou hast given that revelation to us of thyself as the God who delighteth in mercy.
- [2 : 34] O Lord, we ask, O Lord, that thou hast given that thou hast given that thou hast given us through our hearts. O Lord, that thou hast given us through our hearts. Thou knowest their needs. And we pray, O Lord, that thou would meet with their needs out of the riches of thy grace through Jesus Christ.
- Bless those who are ill. O may thy healing hand be upon them. And we pray, O Lord, that thou would bless any who may be mourning today over the passing of loved ones.
- As they see empty places in their homes, in their families, in their neighbourhood, in our communities. O Lord, a reminder to us all that we are sojourners in this world.
- O Lord, that each one of us passes through this world on our journey to our long home. And we pray, O Lord, that when that journey in this world comes to an end.
- That it will be true of each and every one of us that we will enter into the joy of the Lord. O we give thanks, O Lord, for that provision that thou hast made for us in thy Son, Jesus Christ.
- [3 : 50] O Lord, that he came into this world. And that he went to the cross of Golgotha. And there that he suffered in the Roman place of all those he came to redeem.

All those who will put their trust in him. And we give thee thanks, O Lord, for his present ministry at thine own right hand. In the intercession that he makes on behalf of his people.

And we give thee thanks, O Lord, for the promise of his return. To engather his own. To be with him forever in body and in soul.

O Lord, we pray for the advancement of the gospel in our own nation. O Lord, we confess that we have sinned against thee. We confess, O Lord, that we have gone astray.

That we are far away from thee. Grant, O Lord, that in thy mercy thou would return us to thyself. And that we, O Lord, may be a people who would come in repentance.

[5 : 03] Who would seek the mercy of God in Jesus Christ. To that end, we pray, O Lord, that the gospel would go forth today.

In the power and demonstration of thine own spirit. In turning the hearts of our people. O Lord, that they may come to seek a refuge in thee.

For thou art the only one who can provide that refuge for sinners. O Lord, we pray that thou would bless all those who proclaim the riches of thy grace today.

In the proclamation of the gospel. That it may indeed touch the hearts of our people. That it may be applied to them by the spirit.

For it is the spirit that quickens. The flesh profiteth nothing. And so we pray for all thy servants. Who have gone forth with thy word.

[6 : 04] That they may have the unction of thine own spirit upon them. Proclaiming thy truth with boldness and with confidence. Knowing, O Lord, that thy word shall not return unto thee empty.

We pray, O Lord, that thou would bless all nations of the earth. And we pray, O Lord, that thou would continue with us. As we come together for a short time today.

O Lord, that thou would open our hearts to receive thy word. And that it would bring forth evidence in our lives. To the glory of thine own name.

We ask, O Lord, that thou would bless each one of us. According to our individual needs. And all that we ask with the forgiveness of our sins.

It's in Jesus' name and for his sake. Amen. We shall now read the word of God from the Old Testament.

[7 : 06] And from the book of Psalms. Psalm 119. And we shall begin our reading at verse 97.

Psalm 119 at verse 97. O how love I thy law. It is my meditation all the day.

Thou through thy commandments hast made me wiser than mine enemies. For they are ever with me. I have more understanding than all my teachers.

For thy testimonies are my meditation. I understand more than the ancients. Because I kept thy precepts. I have refrained my feet from every evil way.

That I might keep thy word. I have not departed from thy judgments. For thou hast taught me. How sweet are thy words unto my taste.

[8 : 05] Yes, sweeter than honey to my mouth. Through thy precepts I get understanding. Therefore I hate every false way. Thy word is a lamp unto my feet.

And a light unto my path. I have sworn and I will perform it. That I will keep thy righteous judgments. I am afflicted very much.

Quicken me, O Lord, according unto thy word. Accept I beseech thee the free will offerings of my mouth. O Lord, and teach me thy judgments.

My soul is continually in my hand. Yet do I not forget thy law. The wicked have laid a snare for me. Yet I eard not from thy precepts.

Thy testimonies have I taken as an heritage forever. For they are the rejoicing of my heart. I have inclined my heart to perform thy statutes always.

[9 : 09] Even unto the end. Even unto the end. And so on. May the Lord bless unto us the reading of that portion of his word. Now, seeking the Lord's help, let us turn to the New Testament and to Paul's epistle to the Romans.

And chapter 7. And we'll read from verse 7. Romans 7 at verse 7.

What shall we say then? Is the law sin? God forbid. Nay, I had not known sin but by the law. For I had not known lust except the law had said thou shalt not covet.

But sin taking occasion by the commandment wrought in me all manner of concupiscences. For without the law sin was dead. For I was alive without the law once.

But when the commandment came, sin revived and I died. And the commandment which was ordained to life, I found to be unto death. For sin taking occasion by the commandment deceived me and by it slew me.

[10 : 26] Wherefore the law is holy and the commandment holy and just and good. Was then that which is good made death unto me? God forbid.

But sin that it might appear sin, working death in me. By that which is good. That sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful.

And so on. Romans chapter 7 is about the law and its functions. And the relationship of the Christian to the law.

As we have seen in the first six verses of this chapter. We are shown that Christians are in an entirely new relationship to the law.

And that this new relationship is essential so that they may bring forth fruit unto God. And serve God in newness of spirit.

[11 : 29] And not in the oldness of the letter. The Christian is a person who is no longer in Adam and under the law as a path to life.

But the Christian is a person who is in Christ and who is under grace. Now from verse 7 to 12.

Paul vindicates the law and shows that our failure to keep the law is not because of any defect in the law. And he shows that any weakness that there is in the law is because of us.

Because the law has to work through us. And we are sinners. And as such the law is not able to deliver us.

Paul says, what shall we say then? Is the law sin? God forbid. Paul imagines someone raising an objection or concluding that because of what he has said about the law, that it is unable to deliver us and that it aggravates our sinful passions and desires.

[12 : 49] Therefore that the law is bad and sinful. And immediately Paul answers with his famous formula, God forbid.

Or he says, by no means. Paul is saying that it is unthinkable that one should come to such a conclusion regarding the law.

Then he relates his own experience in regards to the law. Nay, I had not known sin, but by the law. For I had not known lust, except the law had said, thou shalt not covet.

Now Paul is not saying that he was not aware of the fact of sin, because we are all aware of the fact of sin. We are all aware that certain things are wrong and sinful.

There is that general knowledge of sin among mankind. But what Paul says here is that there was a time when he was unaware of the true nature of sin until the law made it clear to him.

[14 : 04] Already he has alluded to this in chapter 3 and verse 20. It is the law that gives us knowledge of sin.

It is the law that shows us the true nature of sin. We can all have our own conception and notion of what sin is.

But to know the true nature of sin, we are dependent upon the law of God. Paul is saying that he would not have known sin as he knows it now, or have seen himself as a sinner, except by the law.

And this must be the starting point of evangelism. If we are going to exhort people to come to Jesus Christ as saviour, then we have to show people why they need a saviour.

Why do we need to be redeemed? So many people look to the law and think that if they do their best to keep the law, that that will bring them to salvation.

[15 : 32] The fact is, as the word tells us, for whosoever shall keep the whole law and get offended in one point, he is guilty of all.

To do our best is not enough. We must keep the whole law perfectly. And the thing is, that we cannot keep the law perfectly.

And therefore we are all giftly of breaking the law, and hence we come under the condemnation of the law. Again in chapter 3 of this very letter, Paul says, In writing to the Galatians in chapter 3, Paul says, Paul here says, For I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet.

Well, what is lust? The word itself is neutral, or an unbiased word. It really just means a strong desire.

For instance, in the Gospel of Luke, chapter 22, verse 15, we read that Jesus said to the disciples, With desire I have desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer.

[17 : 33] The word desire there is actually the word lust. So, it is the context that will actually tell us whether we are to take it in a neutral, or in a good, or a bad sense.

Obviously there in Luke 22, it is to be taken in a good sense. However, usually it means a desire after anything that is forbidden.

Paul says that He had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet. Here he specifically brings before us the Tenth Commandment.

You shall not covet your neighbour's house. You shall not covet your neighbour's wife, or his male servant, or his female servant, or his ox, or his donkey, or anything that is your neighbour's.

I think Paul does this quite deliberately. For notice the difference between this commandment and the other commandments. The other commandments are all about outward actions.

[18 : 48] But this commandment is about an inward action. It's about what takes place within us, which results in outward actions. There is a sense in which it is right to say that to kill, or to steal, and so on, begins with coveting.

Now, Paul was a Pharisee. And as we already noted from our previous study in Philippians, like all Pharisees, he thought of sin simply in outward and, or in external actions.

He had no knowledge that he could sin by having evil desires, or evil thoughts, or even by his imagination, or coveting.

As long as it remained in desire, in thought, and in the imagination, he concluded that it was not sin. Paul did not look at sin as extending to the thoughts of the heart.

But the Lord taught him that sin was not merely an outward actions, but an inward reality. I may be accused of repeating this, but it is important that we grasp and understand what sin is.

[20 : 14] In the New Testament, in Matthew chapter 5, we are told that Jesus said, He have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery.

But I say unto you, that whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.

The Pharisees thought that as long as you did not commit the act, that you were not guilty of sin. But Jesus teaches them that the desire is sinful, that the lust is sinful.

He teaches them that the problem is a problem of the heart. Jesus said, For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornication, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness.

You see, what was wrong is that the Pharisees and the Jews had a wrong conception of the law. They failed to understand that the law is spiritual, that it is concerned with the heart.

[21 : 34] In other words, its concerns are not merely with outward actions, but with the inward thoughts and desires and imaginations.

So, Paul came to realize that an evil desire or thought or imagination made him as guilty before God as the actual deed.

he would not have come to understand the part that lust played in his life if it were not for the law.

The law brought him and it brings every Christian to see the true meaning of sin and their own sinful condition, the power of lust within them.

So, he says, the law is not useless. For without the law, I would not have come to see myself as I truly am in the sight of God.

[22 : 45] I would have come to, I would not have come to see my need for a deliverer, for a saviour and redeemer if it wasn't for the law. Yes, the law led me to Christ.

Today, are we clear in our minds that to lust after an evil thing is sin? Are we clear that to desire to sin is sin?

Are we clear that we can sin in our thoughts, in our imagination, as well as in our actions? The Shorter Catechism answers the question what sin is by saying, sin is any want of conformity unto or transgression of the law of God.

Now, as we have already noted, the law aggravates our sinful passions and desires. And here, in verse 8, Paul explains why that is so.

But sin, taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of conceptions, for without the law, sin was dead. Or as the New King James Version puts it, but sin, taking opportunity by the commandment, produced in me all manner of evil desire, for apart from the law, sin was dead.

[24 : 19] Paul, by using the word sin here, is not thinking so much of sinful actions, but rather of the principle of sin. That power that works in fallen human beings.

He says, taking occasion by the commandment, or taking opportunity by the commandment. In other words, what he is saying is, sin uses the commandment as its starting point.

What did it do? It wrought in me, or produced in me, it worked powerfully to produce an end result, which was all manner of evil desire.

It increases the desire for that which is prohibited. The law may restrain us from the outward act, but it excites the sinful inclinations of the sinful mind.

In Genesis chapter 8, we are told that the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth. This principle of sin is powerful, so much so that it can use the law as the starting point of producing evil desires, to lust after that which is forbidden, even giving us an evil imagination.

[25 : 54] It is so powerful that Paul earlier in this letter refers to sin as reigning or controlling. For in chapter 5, he says, as sin hath reigned unto death.

We touched on this, I think, last week. Paul also speaks of sin as having dominion. In chapter 6, he says, sin shall not have dominion over you, implying that sin has dominion over us as we are by nature.

He speaks of sin as a slave master. In the same chapter, chapter 6, he says, you were the servants of sin.

My dear friend, we must realize the power of sin. The sin that takes even the very law of God to produce in us evil desires.

Paul says, without the law, sin was dead. That is, he did not understand what sin or the power of sin was.

[27 : 20] But he says, I was alive without the law once, but when the commandment came, sin revived and I died.

Now, we must remember that the law does not cause sin. But through the law, we discover sin. The law strips sin for us out of its disguise.

It brings it to light. before the law came, sin was dead and Paul was alive. But then the law came and sin revived and Paul died.

What does Paul mean when he says that he was alive without the law once? There has been no time when mankind has been without law. There was law even in the Garden of Eden.

when Paul said that there was a time when he was alive without the law, he means that as far as his experience was concerned, the law was not doing its work.

[28 : 33] It was there and as a Pharisee that Paul knew the law well. Remember what he said about himself touching the righteousness which is in the law blameless and yet he was in a sense without the law.

Perhaps this is made clearer by what follows. He says when the commandment came sin revived and I died. What does he mean by when the commandment came?

Wasn't the commandment always there? did he not know all the commandments? Intellectually he knew them all and was sure that he was keeping them, touching the righteousness which is in the law blameless, he says.

But then there came a day in his experience of which he says here when the commandment came. we can illustrate this by what happens very often in our own experience.

You may read a verse in the Bible many times but then all of a sudden you see something there that you had never seen before. What happens?

[30 : 01] Well what has happened is that it has come to you. It has spoken to you. You have received a knowledge or an insight that you did not have before.

Paul knew the law. He knew all the commandments but there came a day and he got a new insight into the law that he did not have before.

Paul knew the letter of the law but he never understood the spirit of the law until one day. There was a time when the law came with conviction with enlightenment with understanding and he says before the law came sin was dead.

He came to understand that sin is not merely concerned with outward actions but that it is concerned with the heart.

He came to understand that you could sin in the desire that you could sin in the thought that you could sin in the very imagination. We are all sinners.

[31 : 20] We were never without sin. We are born sinners. What Paul means here is that as far as he was concerned there was a time in his experience when sin was dead.

it really did not bother him. That does not mean that there are not times when sin does stop our conscience but very often it's fear of being found out.

We must remember that sin is never dormant, it is never quiet. We are told to be on our guard against the deceitfulness of sin. Sin deceives and makes you think that all is well and lures you into a false sense of peace.

And what Paul says here is I was like that once. I did not know the power of sin. And in that condition I thought I was alive and that sin was dead.

He felt full of life and power. He was full of self-confidence. As far as the law was concerned he thought of himself as being blameless.

[32 : 37] He thought of himself as a true example of what it was to be a religious man. He was exceedingly zealous of the traditions of his fathers.

He was absolutely a man who was self-satisfied. Paul sums up his condition so perfectly in chapter 10 where he says for they have been ignorant of God's righteousness and going about to establish their own righteousness have not submitted themselves into the righteousness of God.

Oh while he was going about establishing his own righteousness he thought that he was alive. And maybe today that is a picture of yourself.

You think that you are alive but actually you are dead. We need to be brought alive. We need to be quickened as Paul says in his letter to the Ephesians and you have been quickened who were dead in trespasses and sin.

In that life when we thought we were alive what was through of us is that we walked according to the course of this world according to the prince of the power of the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience among whom also we all had our conversation in times past.

[34 : 03] Yes in the lusts of our flesh fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind and wed by nature the children of wrath even as others we were spiritually dead.

but Paul says when the commandment came sin revived and I died.

When the Lord came sin revived that means that he began to see the true nature and power of sin. for the Lord said to him not to covet.

Not to covet. That is not to covet what he could not rightfully have. That is what covetousness is. The desire to have what is not rightfully ours.

And it is so powerful that it will take what is not rightfully ours even if it means leaving the other person in extreme poverty. It will even lead to steal to kill to gain what is not rightfully one's own.

[35 : 18] And sin stirs up an overwhelming and powerful desire for such things. In the Gospel of John chapter 15 Jesus says if I had not come and spoken unto them they had not had sin but now they have no cloak for their sin.

If I had not done among them the works which none other man did they had not had sin. Is Jesus saying that if he had not come into the world these people would not have had sin?

Of course not. What he means is that by his teaching and works their sins have been exposed.

This is exactly what happened to Paul. When the commandment came sin was exposed and the man who was so much alive dies.

In what sense did he die? Well Paul came to realise his helplessness and his hopelessness. he came to realise that man's self in his confidence and in his satisfaction died.

[36 : 54] When the commandment came when the law came the man's self in his confidence and satisfaction died.

That's the moment when he could say but what things would gain to me those I counted lost for Christ. Yet doubtless and I count all things but lost for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord for whom I have suffered the loss of all things and do count them but done that I may win Christ and be found in him not having mine own righteousness which is of the law but that which is through the faith of Christ the righteousness which is of God by faith all that I may know him and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of his sufferings being made conformable unto his death if by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead by the holy spirit a person is convicted of his sin the holy spirit convicts a person of their sin and they come to perceive the real extent of sin the person sees or discerns it not only in its external or outward actions but also comes to understand that it is inherent in them that they are sinners that this principle of sin rules in them and controls them that this principle of sin has dominion over them that they are sinners what about yourself today do you think of sin and sinners mainly in terms of particular actions do you see all your own efforts to be saved to be done do you see your need of a saviour can you say like the psalmist for mine iniquities are gone over mine head as an heavy burden they are too heavy for me my wounds stink and are corrupt because of my foolishness

I am troubled I am bowed down greatly I go mourning all the day long for my loins are filled with a lonesome disease and there is no sadness in my flesh I am feeble and sore broken I have roared by reason of the disquietness of my heart you know there is no more dangerous day to be in today than to feel that we are not sinners to feel that there is no sin in us it probably should not be a surprise to us how many people will say I do not really feel that I am a sinner or they will say I live a good life I do good I help others I try to do my best I do not feel that I am a sinner they are like that he was alive but when the commandment came things were different the apostle

John tells us if we say that we have no sin we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us if we say that we have not sinned we make him a liar and his word is not in us we must remember that the thoughts and intents of our hearts are as important in the sight of God as our actions those sinful desires and the sins of our imagination that we enjoy and that we feed upon and perhaps feed them ourselves especially through our advancement in technology they are as sinful in the sight of God as those sinful actions that we do outwardly and he goes on and he says and the commandment which was ordained to life I found to be unto death when the commandment came he discovered that what was ordained to life in his case was unto death now

Paul has spent time in proving that no one can find the path of life by the law for instance he says in chapter 3 therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight for by the law is the knowledge of sin but now he says that the commandment or the law was ordained to life is Paul contradicting himself no but he is saying that if anyone had kept the law perfectly then it would have led to life in Leviticus chapter 18 we are told that God said you shall therefore keep my statutes and my judgments which if a man do he shall live in them notice that the promise is conditional if a man do it depends on us keeping every point of the law something that we cannot do when the law or the commandment came that was ordained to life

[42 : 33] Paul found it to be unto death the law condemned him showed him the evil nature of sin showed him his utter helplessness and misery the shorter catechism answers the question into what he stated the fall bring mankind by saying the fall brought mankind into an state of sin and misery then the catholicism asks the question wherein consists the sinfulness of that he stayed where into man fell and it answers it like this the sinfulness of that he stayed where into man fell consists in the guilt of Adam's first sin the want of original righteousness and the corruption of his whole nature which is commonly called original sin together with all actual transgressions which proceed in it Paul is given a true definition of sin through the coming of the commandment instead of obtaining life through the laws he once thought now he died now remember it was not the law that died but

Paul that died he saw the futility the uselessness of attempting to find the path of life by trying to keep the law which he could not perfectly keep I suppose that the simple answer to all this is that Paul found that the commandment of the law that was ordained to life to be unto death for him because of sin in 1st Timothy chapter 1 Paul says but we know that the law is good if a man use it lawfully but the problem is that we cannot use it lawfully and that is because of sin and Paul goes on to explain he says for sin taking occasion by the commandment deceived me and by slew me he is more or less repeating himself here he has already referred to the fact that sin taking opportunity by the commandment produced in me all manner of evil desire showing forth the power of sin now here he is telling us about the deceitfulness of sin as the new

King James version puts it and the commandment which was to bring life I found to bring death for sin taking occasion by the commandment deceived me and by it killed me he is telling us that sin is not only powerful but it is at the same time deceiving at the very beginning we find the deceitfulness of sin in Genesis 3 we read and the Lord God said to the woman what is this you have done and the woman said the serpent deceived me and I ate and at the end in 2 Thessalonians chapter 2 we are told the coming of the lawless one that is the antichrist is according to the working of Satan with all power signs and lying wonders and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish because they did not receive the love of the truth that they might be saved from the beginning and to the end sin is out to deceive no wonder the writer to the

Hebrews exhorts us in chapter 3 and says exhort one another daily while it is called to gay less any of you be hardened to the deceitfulness of sin oh it's power and deceitfulness are paraded before us every day even in our own experience despite the fact that we know the pain the grief that sin brings we still go on in the practice of sin well what the law says to me and you today is this there is only one way of salvation and that is in Jesus Christ may the Lord bless our thoughts let us pray eternal and ever blessed Lord we give thanks unto thee that there is salvation to be found in Jesus Christ and only in

Jesus Christ and we pray pray oh Lord that today that we would lay aside all our own works that we do to try and work out our own salvation to remember that salvation is only to be found in the finished work of Jesus Christ Christ so let us lay aside our own works and our own achievements and lean solely on the finished work of Jesus Christ pray oh Lord that thou would continue with us during the day may the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all now and forevermore Amen