

# The Law, the Sinner, and the Struggle

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[ 0 : 00 ] Good morning, everyone. It's a wonderful, beautiful day to be with you here this morning.! Please take your Bibles out to Romans chapter 7.

! If you are new or visiting, my name is BK. I have the pleasure of serving here as one of the pastors. You're kind of jumping in on a very interesting sermon, not because of any great skill of mine, but there's an issue that we need to deal with.

And before we read today's text, I need to prepare you for what we are about to walk into. This text is easily one of the most debated, discussed, and misunderstood texts in all the entire Bible.

And I'm not saying that flippantly or for some type of rhetoric. For centuries, there's been faithful believers, serious scholars, pastors who love the Word of God, who've wrestled through these verses, and some have come to one conclusion, others have come to another.

In fact, even on our pastoral staff, we have different views on the text. If you're wondering who that is, I'll give you a hint.

[ 1 : 30 ] His first name begins with the letter D. And at times, this passage has produced more confusion than clarity.

But I want you to understand right from the very start, this does not mean the Bible is unclear. I really believe it's time for us to slow down and listen carefully to this text.

So before I say anything more, please turn your Bibles. We're going to look at verse 14 to 25. I'm going to read it for you this morning.

And you're immediately going to have a response to this text, whether you realize it or not. Starting in verse 14, for we know that the law is spiritual, but I am of the flesh sold under sin, for I do not understand my own actions, for I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate.

Can anybody relate to that? Now, if I do what I do not want, I agree with the law, and that is good.

[ 2 : 50 ] So now it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells within me. For I know that nothing good dwells in me that is in my flesh.

For I have the desire to do what is right, but not the ability to carry it out. For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I keep on doing.

Now, if I do what I do not want, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells within me. So I find it to be a law that when I want to do right, evil lies close at hand.

For I delight in the law of God in my inner being, but I see in my members another law waging war against the law of my mind and making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members.

Wretched man that I am, who will deliver me from this body of death. Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord.

[ 4 : 07 ] So then I myself serve the law of God with my mind, but with my flesh I serve the law of sin. Let me explain to you why this text matters to everyone.

How you understand this passage will shape how you understand the Christian life.

It will shape how you think about your struggle with sin. It will shape your growth in holiness. It will shape your expectations of yourself and ultimately your dependence on Christ.

So let me start from the very beginning. This is not a theological discussion. This is a personal discussion. This is a truth that resonates in every single one here.

There is many, this is where many people live. This is where many people struggle. And for some, some people feel stuck. So before we say anything about the text, we need to decide how we're going to approach this text.

[ 5 : 29 ] And the reason is simple. I believe there is a wrong way to come to this text and there is a right way. And let me explain the wrong way to you first. It is to come to this passage with assumptions.

It's to come to this passage with assumptions. And there's two big assumptions most people make when we come to this passage. And I believe most of us are in this camp.

And that assumption is we let our experience shape our conclusion of this text. Right? We find there's aspects of this text that resonate with us.

Am I not right on that? Am I not right on that? You can give me a Baptist amen. Thank you. Right? It resonates. Who doesn't struggle with sin?

Who doesn't want to do the things that they want to do but they still find themselves doing and there's this war? The other wrong assumption that people make is we let our theological camp decide what it is.

[ 6 : 32 ] And then we tend to defend this passage by where we line up by whatever system that we have for this. And then we try to force the text into this system.

I don't want to do that. I want us to approach this text in a way that Martin Lloyd-Jones the great Welsh preacher says we approach this text with a great deal of caution and a maximum amount of humility.

Let me say this clearly. Like I said there are two ways to approach the passage. The other way which is what we're going to follow over the next several Sundays is to start with the text and let the text shape our conclusions.

You with me on that one? So what that means is we're going to do some deep diving in what this text actually says. Not what our system says. Right? Not what I've always felt that it means because you know we resonated with it so we think we understand it.

And we're not even going to ask what have I always been told this means. The question that I want to answer for us is what is Paul actually saying? Which is the reason why we're going to go through this text slowly, carefully and let Paul speak to us.

[ 8 : 02 ] Now if you've ever studied this passage before you already know that there is a question that everybody asks.

And that question is who is the I that Paul is referencing? So when Paul says I do not understand my act my own actions when he says I do what I hate I have the desire to do what is right but not the ability to carry out the debate is who is he speaking about?

Is this Paul before he was saved? When he was a Pharisee before that moment that Jesus Christ appeared to him on that road to Damascus?

or is that Paul now? Or is it something else entirely? And this is a real question that we will answer. But this is where I believe many people go wrong. Most people assume that the identity of the I is the most important point of the passage and if you begin your study thinking this is the most important thing that you need to know it's not.

[ 9 : 30 ] It is obviously the most famous question but it's not the most important question. The real issue in Romans chapter 7 is not primarily who Paul is describing but it's what what is the law capable of doing or what can the law not do.

You with me on that? That's the most important issue and you have to keep that at the forefront of your mind to understand this text. And this is where we need to zoom out for a moment because by the time we get to chapter 14 it's not like nothing else has been said.

Right? We've got these 13 chapters that are verses that have happened before. So when it begins for we know that the law is spiritual that word for is doing a lot of work.

It means what Paul is about to say is directly connected to everything he's already said. You with me on that? So you can't interpret it without understanding this first part.

So if we ignore Romans 7 1-13 you will misunderstand Romans 7 14 and on. So if you haven't been here or you've been away for a couple weeks let me give you a very quick recap.

[ 10 : 55 ] In Romans 7 verses 1-6 Paul tells us that we have died to the law and he uses this really interesting illustration. It's a woman who's married to the man and as soon as he's dead she no longer belongs to him anymore.

Right? She's free. That's the same way it is with the law. Once we've been in Christ we died to sin we're no longer married to the law. We're no longer under its authority and we now belong to Christ. Verse 6 says and we serve in the newness of the spirit. Then in Romans 7 starting in verse 7 Paul answers the most obvious question is the law the problem?

And his answer is very emphatic by no means. The law is holy righteous and good but we've also seen that sin uses the law sin twists the law and sin takes what is good and turns it into something

that produces death.

So the big idea of this passage is the law is not the problem but it cannot fix your problem. Because remember the overarching question we're asking is can I change?

[12:15] Can I change? And the question is if I follow the law will I be able to change? Paul's been answering you can't even follow the law so why even bother? You can't. It's not going to bring about the change that you require.

The law can reveal your sin. The law exposes your heart and the law shows you what is wrong. But the law lacks the power to change you, to empower you, or to transform you.

You with me on that? Now, maybe you've been thinking about this or feeling this but there's something missing in this chapter.

It's the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit's only mentioned once in verse 6. It's almost completely absent.

And as you all know, if you know the book of Romans, when you get to Romans 8, the Holy Spirit is everywhere. We've got the one time mentioned, I think there's 26 times Paul is going to refer to the Holy Spirit.

[13:21] and I believe this is not accidental, that this is perfectly intentional, under the supervision of the Holy Spirit, that Paul writes this text, he's setting us up for something great and wonderful and absolutely freeing.

So let me just pause here for a moment, because I believe this is where the text gets real. There are many people, and I believe many people in this room, who feel like this passage describes them.

They're struggling with sin, they're stuck with sin, and they feel like they know what is right, but they just can't do it, or they cannot seem to do it consistently.

And I need to say something from the very beginning. Struggle is real. It's real. But, struggle alone does not define the category.

The question is not, do Christians struggle? The question is, is this the struggle of someone with power or without power?

[14:32] You with me on that? So this I is answering the question, is this someone struggling with power or without power? And this is the great news.

Romans 7 is not the end of the story. It's the setup. It's preparing us for something greater. Because Romans 7 is going to show us what happens when you try to obey God without the power of the Spirit.

And Romans 8 is going to show us what happens when God begins to work in you by the power of the Spirit. You with me on that? Verse 7 without, verse 8 with.

So today, I've got three simple points. And this is more of an introductory sermon to the whole passage. So there's three things that I really want you to know.

And you might kind of say, why does this matter? Trust me, it's going to matter. matter. The first question I want to answer in greater detail is why does this text matter and why it matters to you?

[15:38] It doesn't matter if you're a Christian or a non-Christian, a new Christian or a mature Christian. This text matters. Number two, we're going to answer a little bit who is the I.

What are some of the options that people believe is there? And then number three, we're going to deal with the real issue Paul is dealing with. What is the law? What can it do and what it can't do? You with me on this? All right, let me just pray for us before we go any further. Dear most Lord, Heavenly Father, we thank you for the graciousness of giving us this word. Lord, this week's been a wrestling match.

Just taking in this text and trying to understand it and I don't come here telling everybody that I've got it all figured out.

I obviously have some thoughts and some conclusions but even my study is not even complete for this whole entire section. But Lord, if there's anything that I can communicate is the simple truths that you really are communicating.

[16:51] Because the problem with mankind is we sometimes read into the white spaces, the words that are not said rather than the words that are said. So Father, I pray that you give us a wisdom of a spirit of discernment, a spirit of humility to hear these words and more importantly why this matters.

matters. If we can understand why this matters, we're going to understand why this text is so personal to us. And Paul's words will help us understand it.

So I ask you these things in your most holy and precious name. Amen. Like I said plainly, this is not a simple passage.

passage, but it does not mean the Bible is unclear or God is confusing. The reality is this passage deals with something deep, internal, and something every one of us feels.

It's not simply theology for the sake of knowing. This is ultimately the battlefield of the human heart. And when we read this text, it's easy to say, that's me.

[18:07] And maybe it's even too easy. Now I said, I want you to understand this is not a fringe debate that many people for the centuries have studied, preached, and landing in different places.

It's funny, I was actually going to put off this sermon until June, just so I can get a better handle on things. And Chris said, just go up and just have a big mess.

So, but I wanted to kind of get into the introduction so you could feel the struggle that I'm having so you would understand your own struggle.

Because there's some aspects of the argument that I thought I understood, but just even this week in more of my reading, I feel confronted in that argument. So let me just say this.

If you feel some tension as we walk through this, you're in good company. Because it goes all the way back to the beginning of the church. There's this tension in this passage.

[19:10] Now, I'm going to warn you to not rush into conclusions. Because this passage feels so familiar, many people think they understand it.

people are going to read our experience into the text instead of the text explaining our experience. Bingo, one of the biggest problems of mankind, right?

We want to read ourselves into the text instead of allowing the text to read into us. Because we struggle.

So we think this must be about me. I feel this, so this must be the Christian life. And if I can just say one thing, avoid doing that.

Just avoid doing that. And here's the hard truth, and I know I'm repeating myself, but if we get this wrong, we will misunderstand sin, we will misunderstand what Christian growth looks like, and we will misunderstand what God expects of us.

[20:19] And the fact is, we may either excuse defeat or demand something God never intended. So, like I said, this is not about whether people struggle.

Unbelievers struggle, believers struggle, mature believers struggle. But there's a distinction here. The question is not, do you struggle?

The question is, what kind of struggle is this? Because it sounds like a struggle that Paul's happening, right? So, it's about identifying what the struggle is.

And this is the struggle, I'm going to name it. It is the struggle where the law is present, but power is absent. You with me on that?

This is the struggle where the law is present, but power is absent. So, before we move any slower, we move any further, we need to slow down, listen, and understand.

[21:29] Do you guys feel the weight of this passage? Let me move on to the second point, just to give you a little bit more information about who is the I. When Paul says, I do not understand my own actions, I do what I hate, I have the desire to do what is right.

We all relate to that, but we have to ask the question, who is Paul talking about? Now, before I get into the details, this is not a small question, but this question shapes everything.

If this is a Christian, then this passage defines the normal Christian experience. You with me on that one? So, if this is a Christian, this is the normal Christian experience.

If you're an unbeliever, then this defines life outside of Christ. And how you answer this question will shape not only your understanding of the Christian life, but what you expect from the Christian life. Am I clear? Am I losing you in the words? All right. I'm going to give you the main views. So, view number one is the unregenerate.

[22:42] The person Paul is talking about is before he was saved. Now, some believe this is Paul describing a person who's not yet saved or even describing himself.

Why do we think that way? Because notice it says he's under the law, he's without the spirit, and he's unable to obey. So, hey, man, that's easy to answer.

Look what it says. It says he's sold under sin, captive to sin. Nothing good dwells in me. So, those who support this position argue that a Christian has been set free of sin, therefore this can't be a Christian.

Right? Because we learned in Romans 6 that Christians cannot be sold as a slave to sin, so therefore it's unsaved. But there's a trouble with that.

At the same time, you'll notice in the text, the individual delights in the law. How can a non-Christian delight in the law? I hate my sin.

[ 23 : 48 ] Why would a non-Christian hate their sin? And three, this individual is obviously having an internal conflict.

Now, if you're a theologian, and if you don't know these names, don't worry about it, but I'm going to throw them out for some of you who have done some reading on this, this is the position that the early church held for close to 400 years.

Early church always believed this. Pelagius, Erasmus, Arminius, later John Wesley, and even modern-day commentators and scholars Douglas Moo and N.T.

Wright hold this position. Now, view number two is the mature Christian view, where others believe this is Paul describing himself as a believer.

As I said, this belief started around 400 A.D. with the writings of Augustine. And this position began to be held by many of the reformers and the Puritans, going back to Aquinas, Martin Luther, Calvin, John Owen Hodge, and modern scholars such as John Murray, Leon Morris, J.F.

[ 25 : 05 ] Packard, John Stott, John MacArthur, John Piper, their position is that God is speaking about a mature believer. They held that Paul is describing his actual current struggle as a mature believer.

Why? Because a Christian loves God, a Christian desires obedience, but a Christian still struggles deeply with sin. We get that part, right?

I'm going to assume most of you hold that position. The strength is that this explains the internal conflict. Because he's mature in Christ, he wants good, he hates sin, and he's feeling divided.

All the feelings that we have at one point or another. It's because only a regenerate person can truly say they delight in the law of the Lord in their inner being as those who are not regenerate.

The other clue is if you're a grammaticist, beyond verse 13, Paul now writes in the present tense as opposed to the past tense.

[ 26 : 14 ] So all of a sudden he's talking presently, it's got to be this, right? But here's the problem. These are the questions. if it's a mature believer, why does Paul say that he's sold under sin?

Why does it say that he's captive? And does this match Romans 6 and Romans 8? If you see this as your position now, these are some of the facts you need to deal with.

Now there's a third view, and I'll call it the convicted but not liberated view, or the saved but immature, or some even call it the carnal view.

They're convicted, they're aware of their sin, and they're desiring to do what is right, but they're not yet living in the power of the Spirit.

Now there's a problem with that. The truth of the matter is as soon as we're saved, we're baptized by the Spirit, right? The Spirit comes into us at that moment of salvation.

[ 27 : 24 ] So that's one of the difficulties. Some believe it's an imaginary or typical picture of someone awakened to the law's demands, but trying to fulfill them in his own strength, leading to wretchedness.

Now one of the major weaknesses of this point is this point is largely rejected by most reformed scholars, because it is arguing that all true Christians possess the Spirit, and that Paul is describing the struggle between this life and the next, what is known as the already but not yet.

All right. You got it? You got it all figured out? All right? Now some of you are trying to decide already where you land.

You've heard some of these things. I think it's this one. I think it's this one. Am I lying or what? Am I right on this? Thanks. I'm right. Right? We get it.

Here's my advice to you. Don't do it. Don't do it. Refrain from doing that just yet. Because this is where many people go wrong. They assume that if they can identify the I, they've understood the passage.

[ 28 : 40 ] And as I said, they end up ignoring the main point. Because the real issue in Romans 7 is not primarily about who Paul is describing, but what the law is capable of doing and what it is not capable of doing.

Because no matter which view you take, there's something that is common to all of them. They all agree on one thing. And that is, there is something fundamentally wrong with us.

Right? Every view agrees, there is a desire for good. Every view agrees, there is a failure to perform it.

Every view agrees, there is an internal conflict, and there is frustration. So this is a picture of someone who knows what is right, but cannot live it out.

So before we decide who this person is, we need to understand what he's facing. Like I said, if we misunderstand the problem, we will not understand the solution.

[ 29 : 49 ] You with me on that? All right, that was a little bit not as encouraging as the last time. So, let me step back, and I'll just say this.

Familiarity with the text personally doesn't mean we have it done accurately. You with me on that? I want you to think about that for a second. So let me just get to my third point. It's refreshing.

What can the law do, and what can the law not do? Look at how this passage begins. Like I said, the word for means Paul is not starting a new thought.

He's continuing an argument. Let me just give you a quick recap again. Romans 7, 1-6, Paul says you died to the law, you're no longer under its authority, you belong to Christ, and you now serve in the newness of the Spirit.

Verses 7-13 says the law is not sin. The law reveals sin. The law exposes sin. The law even provokes sin. But Paul has already said the law is not the problem.

[ 31 : 01 ] But the law is not useless. The law reveals your sin. The law exposes your heart. The law shows you what is right, and it removes any excuse you might have.

Let's be honest. The law keeps us honest. Amen? Amen? We think we're good. We look at the law. Oh, boy. Right? But the problem is the law can't change us.

The law can't give me power to obey. The law cannot produce obedience. The law has no power to transform my heart. So there's a problem.

The problem is us. The law is spiritual and we are fleshly. The law is perfect and we are not.

So when a perfect law meets a perfect fallen heart, it never produces life. It exposes death. As I said, we're going to learn that there's something missing in this entire section, which is the Holy Spirit.

[ 32 : 23 ] It's absent through this struggle, but it dominates chapter 8. And Paul's going to describe what the law looks like with the Spirit.

So now think about what you've seen. A person here knows what is right. A person who agrees with God's law. A person who desires to do good, but has no way to do it.

This is the issue that Paul is exposing in chapter 7. Law is not the problem, but it cannot fix the problem.

The law can expose your sin, but it cannot save you, and it can bring you to the end of yourself, but it cannot take you any further. And that's exactly what Paul wants.

He wants you at the end of yourself, to the place where you stop trying and start looking for a deliverer. It's someone who can finally say, I cannot do this life without something else.

[ 33 : 31 ] More law is not going to do it. It just shows how rotten I am. So what is it? We know the answer. It's Jesus Christ. We've been singing about him. See, Romans 7 is not showing you how to live.

It's showing you why you cannot live for God without the Spirit. So let me just bring this into a conclusion. One, the law is not the problem.

The law cannot fix you. This is exactly where Paul wants us. He wants to take us to the end of self effort. He wants us to take us to the end of trying harder.

He wants to take us to the end of thinking we can fix ourselves so that we can finally ask the right question, who will deliver me from this body of sin?

And what we're going to see is the answer is not found in a system. It's not found in more rules. It's not found in more effort. It's found in a person. next week we step into this struggle because Paul says something shocking.

[ 34 : 41 ] The law is spiritual but I am fleshly. What does that mean? Now, before I get to the table this morning, I need to add some pastoral counsel.

And I need you to hear this. And listen, there's been some great discussions in our growth group. I understand there's been great discussions in the other growth groups over the last several weeks.

And I want to answer a few questions for me. Because some of you are going to hear everything Paul just said and then quietly go back to the law. Not out there but in here.

And the reason is the primary way you believe we relate to God is through the law. What that means is when you leave here you start thinking I need to try harder. I got to wake up early every morning and do my devotions better, right? I need to clean my language up. [ 35 : 51 ] I really got to. I got to get more serious about my study of God's word. And here's the warning. It sounds spiritual but it ends up being deadly. Because this instinct left unchecked takes you right back to the very place that Christ died to free you from.

Ascribing more laws cannot fix you. It never could. It cannot change your heart. It cannot empower obedience. It cannot bring you closer to God. So the law ends up doing one of two things. It either crushes you or makes you arrogant and proud. That's it. There's no in-between. Despair or pride but never life.

It's interesting this morning and this illustration is going to be a little bit raw. Because I was just thinking about these things the last couple of weeks. But as I sat upstairs praying and just writing, I always go through my sermons every morning again and I thought about how I grew up. I grew up in a Bible teaching church and I'm not saying anybody taught this, but there was this understanding that if I'm to draw people to Christ, I need to be the most law fulfilling person in the room.

[ 37 : 12 ] Anybody ever think that, right? Especially when you just got saved. Man, I got to quit smoking. I got to quit swearing. I can't tell those dirty jokes anymore. You start thinking, don't, don't, don't.

You got all these kind of laws that you start creating. That's like your first response. And I remember being in university, I remember being in a study group and someone just finally says, hey, I noticed you don't swear.

Well, I'm like, you haven't been out golfing with me, but that's besides the point. you're just, you haven't seen me in that position. But, you know, I led a pretty moral life exterior. I didn't sleep around. I wasn't involved in drugs or alcohol or any of those things that plagued a lot of students in university. And then when I was with CSIS, I'm supposed to be with the, in case you don't know what CSIS, we're supposed to be the ones defending Canada from spies. And terrorists, you'd think they'd be good guys, right? And they were a lot of them, but personally, morality, they weren't all great. A lot of people cheating on their wives, and I found it hard.

[ 38 : 26 ] I'm working with this guy that I know is running around with his wife. Hey, if my wife calls, tell this. I'm not saying that. I'm not protecting you. Like, what's going on? Right?

And it was hard. It was hard for me. But here's an observation, and remember, I just came up with this thought this morning, so it's a little bit raw.

By holding to the law, no one was ever attracted to Christ through me. Never happened. Instead, they were repelled by me.

He's a zealot. Right? They might think I'm trustworthy, but, and the reason is, when I obeyed the law, guess what I did?

I made everybody else feel guilty. Right? I did these things. You make sure, and when you're a new Christian, I got to make sure I mention I go to church, right? Like, we have all these rules.

[ 39 : 28 ] We think those are the things that are going to draw people to Christ. And I remember, and I mentioned this before, having this conversation with this teacher who was a teacher for 35 years, and I was discipling his son, and he was saying, don't give my son hope for victory in sin, and I'm like, what are you talking about?

And I just started talking about his life. You know, you're a religious man. You come to my church. You give money. I see you all the time. And I said, have you ever led anybody to Christ? And he said, never.

And I'm like, whoa, whoa, whoa. He says, my wife and I, we try to lead a really good life. You know, I make sure I don't drive the nicest car. It's kind of like the third car down. I don't want anybody to think I love money.

Like, they make all these rules. And some of you are laughing because you've thought those things. Don't lie to me. And you just think that I'm representing Christ.

Christ. But when I look back at all the people, I don't know anyone who got saved through that. And I just started asking the question, what draws people to Jesus Christ?

[ 40 : 38 ] Is it the fact that I'm following the law or is it the grace of God fueled by the Spirit? Just this week I was able to go for lunch with the son of a man that I led to the Lord in university.

And he got led to the Lord because I didn't get mad at him. They were playing around drinking and got into trouble. Let me just give you this secret to what living the Christian life is. It's found in Colossians 3. It's pretty simple. Put off the old, put off the things of the world, and put on the things of Christ. It says, put on then as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts.

Act with compassion to the people that you work with. It's not don't feel compassion, but do that. Kindness, humility, meekness means power under control and patience.

Bearing with one another, and if one has a complaint against another, forgiving one another as the Lord has forgiven you, so you must also forgive. forgive. You ever had to forgive someone at work? [ 41 : 54 ] Or a family member? It's outside of their perspective a lot of the times. So the question is, why are we so attracted to the law?

And I'll answer the question here. It gives you something the gospel does not give you, and that's metrics. Right? You can measure yourself. When you're into the law, right, did I obey it? Did I fail? Am I improving? Here's the standard. I'm up to here now, right? And that's incredibly appealing to some people, right? Especially if you're serious, disciplined, or come from a Catholic background.

Right? There's always that comparison. But it's interesting, like we've seen, the law gives standards without power, but we still cling to it because it feels real, it feels safe, it gives the illusion that I'm growing.

If you ever looked at someone while they're down there, I'm up here. You're in that category, that's the way you're thinking. Instead of looking at them as they might be immature, they might be in sin, that's a struggle that they're dealing with.

[ 43 : 12 ] Listen, the law does not give life, it never intended to give life, but it leaves people foolishly believing that they are in control of their relationship with God. If I am doing those things, I will be best blessed in all manner of my life.

That's not what blesses people. What I read in Colossians blesses people. That's why Galatians 5 talks about flesh, spirit, love, joy, peace, kindness, patience, understanding.

That's what draws people to Christ. Not that I don't smoke, I don't swear, and I don't hang out with those who do. Right? So don't confuse this.

We honor the law, but we do not live under it. The law reveals God, but it cannot restore us to him. Because as verses 1 to 6 says, you're no longer married to the law anymore.

You belong to Christ. And that, my friends, is everything. You don't come to God through a system, you come through a person. And I want you to think about this.

[ 44 : 27 ] Because next week we're going to look at the law is spiritual, but I am fleshly. And that's the struggle. But for now, my encouragement to you is don't go back.

Don't rebuild what Christ tore down. Don't run to what never gave you life. Stay in grace, stay in Christ, and stay where the Spirit is at work.

Let me pray. Dear Lord, Heavenly Father, I am, man, I just ask you for grace. I ask you for patience, just being a sinful man, trying to communicate these eternal truths that not only just stretch my mind, but break my heart.

Father, I preach so heavily against these things because I see myself so much in them. And I do so wish someone had taken me aside as a younger man and explained these things to me.

It feels like everything that's good that happened in my life was completely by accident. I did not intend to be nice to lead someone to Christ or not to get mad.

[ 45 : 54 ] It obviously was just the power of the Spirit working through me in that moment where someone experienced grace and wanted to know why I wasn't angry that led for an opportunity to share the gospel.

Father, I pray that you do indeed make us more loving. And through that love, may we fulfill the law. As we love you, Father, as we seek you out, we seek your face.

Even in the midst of our struggles with our sin, I pray that you show your face to us, that you demonstrate your glory to us.

Lord, this table is about our committed love to you as a church, as a body of believers who come to live with one another, to encourage one another, to support one another.

And how we treat each other is a reflection of our love for you, O Father. So as we come to this table, we do so in obedience because you've called us to remember what you have done.

[ 47 : 33 ] And we do it because without these things, we forget these truths that you taught us, Lord. So, Father, I just pray as we come to this table, we would use this time to meditate on you, meditate on our lives, ask the question, are we worthy?

Not are we worthy of salvation? Are we worthy to be loved? But is our life in line with you? Is my love for Christ compelling my love for others?

If my relationships are broken with everybody around me, there's probably a lot of work that needs to be done there. And I would ask they would refrain from coming to this table.

I would ask that they would use this time to pray unto you, to meditate on you, and to resolve in their hearts to do what they cannot through the law, but do so through the Spirit and seek reconciliation, forgiveness, and patience with others.

So, God, we love you, we thank you, and we ask for your blessing upon this table. In your name we pray. Amen.