

Sermon Title: The Long Arm Of The Law

Speaker: Jim Harris

Scripture Text: 1 Tim. 1:8 (10 Commandments # 13 of 13)

Date: 5-22-11

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Last Sunday, we finished the Tenth of the Ten Commandments, and I promised you that we wouldn't quite be done yet because I want to help you know how to take things like the Ten Commandments given to Israel—and we are not Israel—in a completely different setting, very different from our world, and know how to do what the Scriptures say, and understand that that is "profitable" for you and for helping equip you for "training in righteousness" (2 Tim. 3:16; cf. Matt. 4:4).

Several years back, I was connecting some electronics, and I needed a switch. It's pretty easy: You plug one wire into one end, and two wires into the other, and the switch works. And after I hooked it up, I saw that there were all these instructions, and I went and looked at it. And here were some of the instructions: "In some cases, mount this switch onto the wall would be a plus. For the purpose of meeting this requirement, the bottom side of the switch with a dedicated hanging hole. All you need to do is, using template sheet and employing a driver to propel two screws into suitable positions." Now I know what *I* sound like in Russian, when we try to communicate something.

Aren't you glad that we have a *clear* Word from God—a *clear* Word about what is important? (cf. Is. 45:19)

So today, my goal is to wrap up the study of the Ten Commandments by helping you see the "bigger picture" of God's Law—"The Long Arm Of the Law," if you will, as it reaches through the centuries and crosses barriers of language and culture.

The whole purpose of the Law is to point you to the Gospel (Gal. 3:24; cf. Rom. 3:20). And Paul said *exactly* what the Gospel is, in First Corinthians 15; he says, "The gospel which I preached to you" (vs. 1), "that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures" (vss. 3-4; NASB-1995—and throughout, unless otherwise noted).

Well, we live in a world where, every day it becomes less and less fashionable to take a coherent stand on moral issues. It has been said—I know we pastors say this—that in the world, there are only two things that you will ever be attacked for: what you do, and what you don't do. So, you had better have a pretty solid understanding of what God wants you to *do*, and what He wants you *not* to do.

So now that we have looked specifically at the Ten Commandments, let's broaden it; let's make sure that we understand how God's Law, in general, applies to our lives today (cf. Lk. 11:28; Jn. 13:17; 14:23-24).

So, two questions I want to ask and answer: What Do The Scriptures Say About This? and, What Do I Do About It?

I have mentioned this in passing along the way in our Ten Commandments studies. One of our people asked me about a movement that is in our country today, called the "Hebrew Roots Movement." There are a few locations, a few groups that practice this; and like most every strange thing today, they have a bigger presence on the Internet. And the person who encountered this through friends asked if I would comment on it.

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I was fully unaware of it at that time, so I did some research. And my first impression—along about Commandment 3 or 4—was to tackle some of the things that the leaders of this movement write and preach, and use them as examples of ways that people misuse the Bible, but there is no end to *that* stuff; that could go on for a *very, very* long time. And I realized that, if only one family in our church has encountered these things, it is probably not necessary to spend a lot of time on it from the pulpit.

So, what I ultimately decided to do was to put together all you need to know about the Hebrew Roots Movement; just a couple of simple points, in case you hear about this:

The Hebrew Roots Movement teaches that the Church has abandoned its proper identity. It's like a lot of things that come along and say, "Well, you know, we know there is the established church; we know that has been going on for all this time—but now, *we know something better*; we know something *everybody else* has missed." They are one of those groups.

They say that we should be using Hebrew names, and translating the Bible accordingly. For example: They refuse to use the anglicized word "Jesus." They insist that He should be called "Yeshua," because that is how His name sounds in Hebrew or Aramaic. Well, I think the theological word for that is "silly"!

But it's *worse* than "silly" because they use such things to create this smokescreen of scholarliness created by using unfamiliar words. Words have meaning; and so, if somebody uses a word you don't know, you assume they *know* something you don't know, and they must be smarter than you.

There is a whole lot of that going on, but it ignores the basic principle of translation! I mean, the Scripture was written in Hebrew in the Old Testament—a little bit of it in Aramaic, a dialect of Hebrew. The New Testament was written in Koine Greek. A translation has to get the meaning from the original into the language, so why speak in English and throw in 50 Hebrew words? *Translate them*; give the meaning—that is what *ought* to be going on (cf. Neh. 8:8).

Something else you need to know: Not only has the Church abandoned its proper identity, the Hebrew Roots Movement teaches that we *can* and we *should* be keeping the Law of God today. They believe that we—even though we are *not* Israel; even though we are *not* in the Land; even though this is *not* the Kingdom; even though Christ is *not* present on Earth; even despite what the New Testament says, that it is now "the body of Christ" (Eph. 4:12), Jew and Gentile together (Eph. 2:11-16; 3:6)—they teach that we should be living by the Torah, the Law. That flagrantly contradicts many New Testament passages—which they, in turn, argue that they don't really mean what they say.

The third thing the Hebrew Roots Movement teaches is that there is no such thing as eternal security—that you cannot know *for sure* that you will one day be with the Lord (contra 2 Pet. 1:10a; 1 Jn. 5:13). In *this* respect, they follow the modern heresy of the "New Perspective on Paul." And some of you that have been around here a long time, you notice that in some circles around *these parts*, the "New Perspective on Paul" came by.

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They are people who say that for *all these centuries*, the Church has *misunderstood* the Pharisees; they really weren't bad guys! The Church has misunderstood the Doctrine of Justification; Martin Luther fought the wrong battle on the wrong issue, and the Protestant Church has *missed* the whole thing!

I was rather surprised at first—and then I realized that I should not be surprised at all—the Hebrew Roots Movement, in some of their websites, actually *link* to information about the "New Perspective on Paul"; and all of the Hebrew Roots Movement's teachings that I could find all fit the heretical "New Perspective on Paul."

If you stop by in our foyer, you'll notice in our literature rack, there's a little pamphlet entitled: "New Perspective, Old Heresy." That is what it is, and it is a *sinister* thing; it is a *very, very* dangerous thing because it has been *invited* into Evangelicalism! One of the most flagrantly prolific writers and speakers of heresy these days has been a featured speaker at the meetings of the Evangelical Theological Society! It is a tragedy that has gone on. The Hebrew Roots Movement is one more way that it is coming in.

What put me over the edge about thinking whether I should deal with any of these specifics or not was when I got to the point that I realized: These people are *not Christians*! This is *not* part of the family tree! I found on their websites that at least, I think, the *majority* of those in the Hebrew Roots Movement *deny* the deity of Jesus Christ (contra Jn. 1:1, 14; Col. 2:9), and they *deny* eternal hell (contra Rev. 20:10, 14-15).

Furthermore, one prominent website in this movement says that the Gospel is *not* what we usually say it is; it is all about the Kingdom. Now, never mind that the Apostle Paul *defined* what the Gospel is: "Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures...He was buried...He was raised on the third day" (1 Cor. 15:3-4). They say, "No! The Gospel is about the Kingdom that is coming." Well, they *are* connected, mind you, but the Gospel *is* the Gospel (e.g., Eph. 1:13). That puts these people *thoroughly* into the category of heresy and false teaching (cf. Gal. 1:8-9).

So, don't be swept away by it. If you know someone in it, it is worth confronting; it is worth exposing them to the Scripture because souls could be at stake! But unless you *are* dealing personally with somebody promoting the Hebrew Roots Movement, or being taken in by it, I don't think you need to know any more than to say, "Don't go there!"

Christianity is *not* about making people Jewish (cf. Acts 15:1, 5; Gal. 2:3-5; 5:2-6; 6:12). It is not about teaching people Hebrew words. It is a message for "*all* peoples" (Lk. 2:31) and "*every* tribe and tongue and people and nation" (Rev. 5:9), and it makes *all* of us into "one body in Christ" (Rom. 12:5; cf. Gal. 3:28; Col. 3:11). And so, to say that to become a Christian requires that you then live according to *this one little segment* of culture *misses* the entire point, and misses the diversity of the Body of Christ.

So—end of side-trip; back to the subject at hand:

What is the proper use of the Law of God for a Christian? The Ten Commandments were given to Israel long, long ago; how do they apply to us?

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So we ask the question: What Do The Scriptures Say? I chose one passage to be our theme for this message because it says it so blatantly: First Timothy 1:8. That will be the centerpiece for today. Paul writes to Timothy: "But we know that the Law is good, if one uses it lawfully."

Now, that tells us that there are "good"—or "lawful" or "proper" or "appropriate" or "wise"—uses of the Law of God. And it implies that there are bad—or *unlawful* or *misuses*—of the Law of God.

The context shows what Paul means. Let's back up to First Timothy 1:3. He is writing to his disciple, Timothy, and he says: "As I urged you upon my departure for Macedonia, remain on at Ephesus so that you may instruct certain men not to teach strange doctrines." Timothy's primary duty, when Paul placed him to be the pastor in Ephesus, was to confront and to correct some who were teaching "strange doctrines"—and that refers to doctrines which differ from the Word of God (see Is. 8:20; cf. Ps. 119:128, 160; Jn. 17:17; 1 Tim. 6:3-4a; 2 Pet. 3:2).

Look further and you see what kind of people Paul had in mind in that situation; Verse 4: "nor to pay attention to myths and endless genealogies, which give rise to mere speculation rather than furthering the administration of God which is by faith." Now, that phrase "myths and endless genealogies" refers to fables—made-up stories—and allegories (cf. Titus 1:14). Many of the rabbis would take things in the Bible, like a genealogy, and say that, "It is not really the literal meaning that matters; this is an allegory, a story that kind of discounts the literal meaning, and I'll tell you the true 'spiritual' meaning." These are teachings that spring from the stories and alleged esoteric insights that are not plainly in the text, and they are a waste of time.

In the nineteenth century, we had, from Mary Baker Eddy: "Science and Health With Key to the Scriptures"; and it comments on the first couple of chapters of Genesis, the last couple of chapters of Revelation—and if you want to get an example of the kind of teaching that Paul was referring to here, that's it: taking the literal words, and then telling you that they mean something *completely unrelated* to the meanings of those words and the context in which they were originally written.

So those things are a waste of time. Actually, they are *worse* than a waste of time because they lead people astray from the truth; they *cloud* the simplicity of God's Word. I've talked to people who have grown up in churches where they open their Bible, and they say, "Okay, we are going to talk from this verse today"—and that's the last time they mention that verse, and they preach on all kinds of other stuff, and say, "Now, that's what that verse means." And you subtly get taught, "I don't know what the Bible means! I can't know that! I didn't see all of that there!" That's because *it wasn't there!*

And even if you preach truth, even if you preach sound doctrine, but you don't do it connected to the context of Scripture, you are subtly training people: "You're an idiot! You can't understand the Bible!" But *you can!* It means what it says! It's not hard. "Some things" are more difficult to "understand" than others (2 Pet. 3:16), but the *concept* is right there!

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And so, these things lead to more and more "speculations"—they give rise to mere speculation. Literally, that word is "questionings." Now, it is *perfectly fine* to have questions about spiritual things. This summer, I plan to again do "Questions and Answers"; you can pick the topic for sermons for several weeks by asking me questions. That is perfectly fine! It is profitable to think things through, and to connect what you learn from one place in your Bible with what you learn from someplace else in your Bible. But *speculation beyond what the Bible says* is dangerous (Deut. 29:29a; 2 Jn. 9).

Yesterday, we lived through the speculations of a heretic who has gotten a lot of ink and bandwidth and facetime this last week—a guy named Harold Camping, who said that the Rapture was going to happen yesterday, about five months before the end of the world, which he said is coming in October this year. Now, that is one of the *flashier* kinds of "speculations" which false teachers love.

I think it is sad on a number of fronts. For one thing, this guy says he is a Christian. That's *embarrassing*. He misrepresents *almost everything* to do with Christianity. I can't comment on his own standing before the Lord, but I *can* comment on what he says and what he writes and what he publishes. He *proved himself already* to be a false prophet when he *first* predicted these things back in 1994! He wrote a book called "1994," and he said all these things were going to happen in 1994—but he hedged his bet a little bit; he put a question mark on the title: "1994?"—*could* this be the day? Well, it wasn't. *And this time*, he said he had left out the Book of Jeremiah when he wrote about it in 1994.

I looked at some of the things that he actually wrote. This is what he said in the weeks prior to yesterday: "The biblical evidence is too overwhelming and specific to be wrong. Christ's people can look with great confidence to this date because God promises His beloved will not come upon them as a thief in the night." In other words, he says, "The Rapture will *not* be a surprise, and *I* know the exact time." He goes on to say: "God, in His mercy, has revealed the vital information needed to know the day. Judgment Day on May 21st, 2011, *will* occur because the Bible declares it! Anyone whom God has not saved will arrive at that day with no hope for salvation. God warns simply: *The door will be shut!*" *How embarrassing* that *anyone* on the outside could look at somebody like him, look at people like us, and think that we are the same! That is *truly* sad.

Rather than "speculating"—as he has done—what you need to do is "live by faith" (Gal. 2:20) That is what "furthers" the cause of God on Earth. That is what Paul told Timothy. Faith is believing what God says, and obeying it (Lk. 11:28; Rom. 1:5; 16:26; 2 Thess. 1:8; Jas. 2:14, 26; 1 Pet. 4:17).

And by the way, God *does* say some very specific things concerning the end of the world; we have preached about them. But one of the more *clear* things He said, through His Son, Jesus: Matthew 24:36—"But of that day..." What "day" is He referring to? Judgment Day. "Of that day and hour *no one knows*, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone." Either *that* is true, or somebody like Harold Camping is right. They are *mutually exclusive*! Don't get swept away in such things. And if people around you are, speak the truth gently, persistently, and "in love" (Eph. 4:15; cf. Prov. 3:3; 2 Tim. 2:24-25).

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Go on with what Paul wrote to Timothy: Verse 6—"For some men, straying from these things, have turned aside to fruitless discussion." Two more characteristics of the misuse of the Law of God are described in that verse; they fall under the category of "straying"—or, missing what you should be aiming at: They are called "turning aside" and "fruitless discussion."

True faith is never "fruitless" (cf. Jn. 15:2, 8; Jas. 2:26; 1 Jn. 5:4). True "discussion"—valid discussion of what God says—is never "fruitless." But where there is true faith, there is *also* discussion of the Bible—that's for sure; we are not saying, "Don't discuss things; don't think them through"—but where there is true faith, there is *also* action (e.g., Jn. 10:27; 14:15, 21; 1 Jn. 2:4; Rev. 14:12). Where the Gospel is preached, where people are actually feeding on the Word of God, there is "fruit," and there is "*more* fruit," and there is "much fruit," like Jesus said in John 15 (vss. 2, 5).

People are cared for—that is part of the demonstration of the faith (Rom. 12:13; 2 Cor. 9:12; Jas. 2:14-16; 1 Jn. 3:17). The Gospel is preached faithfully (1 Tim. 4:6; Titus 1:9). Morality strengthens; people *grow* in "sanctification" (Rom. 6:19, 22; Heb. 12:14), and walking closer and closer with the Lord (2 Cor. 3:18; Phil. 1:9; 3:12-14; 1 Thess. 3:12; 4:1; 2 Pet. 1:8; Jas. 4:8a).

Wherever there is valid so-called "Bible Study," it leads the people who study to doing practical, fruitful things which serve the purpose of God through His Church on Earth. "You will know them by their fruits" (Matt. 7:16). People who set up their own organizations outside the Church, contrasting themselves to the Church, criticizing the Church—that's not the real thing. Any Bible study group without specific ways that they serve is missing the point. We study the Word of God so that it will "equip" us "for every good work" (2 Tim. 3:17; cf. Eph. 2:10; Titus 2:14). A Bible study group without specific ways to serve the Lord is, at best, a misguided group that needs to mature; at worst, it's a greenhouse for spiritual delinquency.

We *don't* need to sit around and "speculate," think, get all of the t's crossed and all of the i's dotted on our theology so that *someday* we will actually start serving! We are *born* to be part of the Body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:18; cf. Acts 2:47)—a *functioning* part of the Body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:7; Eph. 4:16; 1 Pet. 4:10). We *never* ignore feasting our souls on the Word of God (Jos. 1:8; Ps. 1:1-2; Matt. 4:4; Rom. 12:2; 1 Pet. 2:2), but it *always* has to produce a change that glorifies God (Ps. 119:38; 1 Thess. 2:13; Jas. 1:25).

In First Timothy 1:7, Paul says: "wanting to be teachers of the Law"—describing these who were to be exposed and expelled by Timothy—he says, "wanting to be teachers of the Law, even though they do not understand either what they are saying or the matters about which they make confident assertions"—like the day of the Rapture, or any other such thing.

This verse makes it clear that there *is* a clear, valid purpose of the Law (cf. Rom. 7:12). So the question is: What *is* the intended purpose of the laws of the Old Testament? And you say, "Well, you tell me it's relevant. I mean, should I have brought a sheep with me this morning, to sacrifice? What do you mean?"

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Well, look back at the context of the Ten Commandments. We stopped at Exodus Chapter 20, Verse 17—the Tenth Commandment. Read three verses farther down: Exodus 20:20—"Moses said to the people, 'Do not be afraid; for God has come in order to test you, and in order that the fear of Him may remain with you, so that you may not sin.' " What is the value of God's Law? To teach you to humble yourself before God (Mic. 6:8; Jas. 4:10), to "walk" in the "fear" of "the Lord" (Deut. 8:6), to teach you how to live "that you may not sin" (cf. Ps. 119:11).

So, what is the proper attitude toward the Law of God? It is the same as it is toward *everything* in the Word of God: You should "love" it (Ps. 119:97). You should "seek" it (Ps. 119:45, 155). You should commit yourself to obeying it (Ps. 119:106). And by the way, you should *read it*; you should take it in! (1 Pet. 2:2) It should lead you to the "fear of" God, and to "hating" your own sin (Prov. 8:13; cf. 2 Kings 22:11; Ezek. 20:43).

But you also understand that no matter *how much* you read and understand and seek to obey the Bible, you are imperfect in your obedience (Ecc. 7:20; Jas. 3:2a); and *here* is the crux of the whole thing: The knowledge of the Law of God *drives you* to the *grace* of God. You know you *cannot* keep the standard, which is perfection (Matt. 5:48; Gal. 3:10; Jas. 2:10; cf. Phil. 3:12; Heb. 12:23).

I wish I had time to show you several dozen passages, but what has been the subject of *books*—multiple books—I'm trying to cram into just our time together this morning, but here are a couple: In Romans 3:20, Paul again says, "By the works of the Law"—doing everything that God says in the Old Testament—"no flesh will be justified in His sight; for through the Law comes the knowledge of sin."

Now, what does that mean? How does "the knowledge of sin" come "through the Law"? Well, it's like the difference between knowing the rules and *not* knowing the rules (cf. Rom. 7:7).

Most of you know that golf is my hobby. I liked it when I first started; it's kind of fun to hit something that hard, and it can't fight back. The truth is, *most* people who play the game cheat nearly all the time: move the ball if it's in the wrong spot, mark the ball improperly, replace it improperly, they don't assess themselves the proper penalties for water hazards and lateral hazards and out-of-bounds, they switch golf balls when they are not allowed to, they take drops illegally, they ground the club in a hazard. You know what? I used to do *all* those things. I still enjoyed what I was doing, but I used to do all those things. And *then*, I read the rules, and I realized that I am accountable to a very precise standard. Through my "knowledge" of "the Law," I came to know my transgressions. Do you see the analogy?

Romans 5:20—"The Law came in so that the transgression would increase; but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more." Now, let me ask you: Did man become more sinful *after* the Ten Commandments were given to Moses? No. But the *awareness* of sin increased (cf. Rom. 7:13). When you turn "the light" on brighter, you can see better (Eph. 5:13; cf. Ps. 119:130). The more you are aware of your sin, the more you understand the *spectacular grace of God!* (cf. Ps. 38:4 with Matt. 11:28)

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A couple years back, I preached to you about Nadab and Abihu in Leviticus Chapter 10: The *very first day* of the worship in the Tabernacle, and the Number 2 and Number 3 priests in all of Israel are *incinerated* by a miraculous bolt of lightning in front of everybody because they broke *one rule!* What is that supposed to teach you? God is kind of precise! The standard is *perfect obedience!* (Jos. 22:5; 1 Pet. 1:15-16) Anything less than that standard—you are a sinner (Rom. 3:23); you need "grace" (Rom. 3:24).

The Law brings you to the grace of God. And when you are measured by the standard of God's Law, you are found wanting (Ps. 143:2; Lk. 17:10). Romans Chapter 3, Verse 9, puts it this way—just a summary of those first two chapters: "Both Jews and Greeks are all under sin." No matter what your background is, no matter how much you know that somebody else *doesn't* know, you are a sinner.

Paul put it all together for you this way in Galatians 3, starting at Verse 21—"Is the Law then contrary to the promises of God? May it never be! For if a law had been given which was able to impart life, then righteousness would indeed have been based on law. But the Scripture has shut up everyone under sin, so that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe." It's by faith, not by keeping the Law. And he goes on to say: "But before faith came, we were kept in custody under the law, being shut up to the faith which was later to be revealed. Therefore"—here's the point—"the Law has become our tutor to lead us to Christ, so that we may be justified by faith. But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor. For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus" (vss. 21-26).

We are "not under the Law" (Gal. 5:18; cf. Rom. 6:14-15). The Law pointed to the need for a Savior (Lk. 18:13). God sent the "Savior" (Acts 5:31). The Law is fulfilled—*but it still serves a purpose!*

The word "tutor" here in Galatians 3 is not our word for a teacher, *per se*; it describes one who is hired as an attendant or a guardian, whose job it was to assure the child's safe arrival at school. The true Teacher is Christ; the Law is there to keep you in bounds so that you can learn at the feet of the Master. All of God's laws, starting with the Ten Commandments, and everything else—including all of those details of all of those sacrifices (cf. Jn. 1:29; 1 Cor. 5:7)—they are all there to lead you to faith in Jesus Christ.

So we read, back in First Timothy Chapter 1—"But we know that the Law *is* good, if one uses it lawfully." So you say, "Okay. But now, okay, I'm in the same era as Timothy: Christ has come; Christ has died; Christ has risen; Christ has ascended; Christ is "building" His "church" (Matt. 16:18); He is at work in my life. What *is* this "lawful" use of "the Law"?

First Timothy 1—keep reading, starting at Verse 9—"realizing the fact that law is not made for a righteous person, but for those who are lawless and rebellious, for the ungodly and sinners, for the unholy and profane, for those who kill their fathers or mothers, for murderers and immoral men and homosexuals and kidnappers and liars and perjurers, and whatever else is contrary to sound teaching, according to the glorious gospel of the blessed God, with which I have been entrusted" (vss. 9-11).



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Do you see how that matches the other Scriptures that we have read? The person who is living a righteous life is *not* the one targeted by the Law. The Law was given to point out sins and sinners, and to drive everyone to "the glorious gospel of our blessed God." That's what it is there for.

So, if you know and love Jesus Christ, how do you regard the Law of God? Do you say, "Oh, goody! I don't have to read the Old Testament! I only have to read 23 percent of my Bible; the first three-fourths doesn't apply to me!" Can't let you off that easy! Same Paul, same Timothy, different letter: He says this, in Second Timothy 3:16-17—"All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work." (cf. Is. 42:21)

What "Scripture" was he referring to? Well, what "Scripture" did Timothy *have*? He had the Old Testament—that first 77 percent. Now, by the time Paul wrote to Timothy, Timothy would have also had Matthew and Mark and Luke, a few of Paul's letters, James, and possibly First Peter. In other words, the New Testament labels every word of the Old Testament—and, by implication, the New (e.g., Jn. 13:20; 1 Tim. 5:18b; 2 Pet. 3:2, 16)—as "profitable" toward the goal of "equipping" you "for every good work" that God will ever do through you (cf. Jn. 3:21; Phil. 1:11; 2:13). These moral laws are "profitable."

You don't get saved by increasing your obedience 20 percent. You get saved by realizing that you can't save yourself, and "Christ died for your sins" (1 Cor. 15:3; 1 Pet. 3:18).

Now, not only are they "profitable"—you say, "Well, they're 'profitable,' but they don't apply to me"—you know what? They are also *permanent*. Look what Jesus said about this in Matthew 5—"Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets"—which is an idiom for the Old Testament—"I did not come to abolish but to fulfill. For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass from the Law until all is accomplished" (vss. 17-18). It is *always* God's Word, and it does not change, and it does not go away (Ps. 19:9a; 119:89). He said, in Luke 16:17—"It is easier for heaven and earth to pass away than for one stroke of a letter of the Law to fail." (cf. Is. 40:8; Matt. 24:35)

So, to put it as simply as possible: *Nothing* is abolished from God's moral Law, *unless* a later portion of the Bible itself says so. And more on what has been changed in a couple of minutes.

God's Law is "profitable." God's Law is permanent. One more "p" word for you: God's Law is precious. Listen to this description from Psalm 19, starting at Verse 7—"The law of the Lord is perfect, restoring the soul; the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple. The precepts of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes. The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring forever; the judgments of the Lord are true; they are righteous altogether. They are more desirable than gold, yes, than much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and the drippings of the honeycomb. Moreover, by them Your servant is warned; in keeping them there is great reward." (cf. Jb. 23:12; Ps. 119:97; Jer. 15:16; Rom. 7:22)

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Is that your attitude toward the Law of God? Look again at David's summary there. I'll put it in a sentence format, instead of poem format: "They are more desirable than gold, yes, than much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and the drippings of the honeycomb. Moreover, by them Your servant is warned; in keeping them there is great reward."

You will *never*, ever be worse off for knowing God's Word better than you do today! (Ps. 119:1-2, 9) It will *always* make you better (Ps. 1:1-3; 119:38; Acts 20:32; 1 Thess. 2:13; Heb. 4:12). It will *always* guide you into "truth" (Ps. 119:151; Jn. 17:17).

So that's What The Scriptures Say. Now, What Do I Do About It?

Well, God's Word—including His Law—is one of His great gifts to you. As Peter put it in one of my favorite passages that I quote so often: Second Peter 1:3—"His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence."

Do you want to live a life that glorifies God? Do you want to live a life that is better? Do you want to live a life that lets you "be," like the Army says, "all that you can be" in the sight of God? Just get to know His Son better through His Word (Jn. 5:39; 2 Cor. 3:18).

Now obviously, when the subject is the value of the Word of God, we can go on for *hours* without exhausting it; but let me give you a couple of summary comments to help you put this all together.

First: The Law was *never* a means of salvation. It is a misinterpretation of God's Word that some people have said, over the centuries, that "the Old Testament is about salvation by Law; the New Testament is about salvation by grace"—that is *not true* (cf. Rom. 4:3-5)—and that "the God of the Old Testament was a stern God, a God of punishment; the God of the New Testament is a God of love." God is God. He is always "the same" (Heb. 13:8; cf. Mal. 3:6), and He is always everything *all at once*, without diminishing any of it. His Law was never a means of salvation; the Scriptures teach that—Romans 3, Galatians 2, Philipians 3, and a whole bunch of other places.

*Never* did God say that a person should expect to be saved by keeping the Law. *Neither* is it a means of sanctification. That's not how you *get into* the family of God, nor is it how you "grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" (2 Pet. 3:18; cf. Rom. 8:2-3).

Many people fall into the snare of thinking, "Well, God loves me when I'm good, and He hates me when I'm bad." That's not the way it is! "God is love" (1 Jn. 4:8); He is *always* love. There is "no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus" (Rom. 8:1; cf. Jn. 3:18a; 5:24). If you are a Christian—if you put your faith in Jesus Christ and what He did and nothing else, and you are trusting in Him and Him alone to save you from your sins, to take you one day to be with Him—if you are His adopted child by that kind of faith, He loves you as His adopted child (Rom. 8:15; Gal. 4:5; Eph. 1:5; cf. Prov. 3:12), and His desire is only for you to know Him and love Him more and more (Deut. 30:6; Jas. 4:8a). And every part of His Word will help in that process.

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Romans 8:1-3 says it this way: "Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death. For what the Law *could not do*, weak as it was through the flesh, God did: sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and as an offering for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh."

The Law shows you that you are a sinner, and you need a Savior; and God sent the Savior. *That* is the point.

Second thing we can say: The purpose of the Law is to show you your sin, and to instruct you in your need for the Savior. Even in the Old Testament, the only way to be saved—the only way to have righteousness—was by faith. Genesis Chapter 15, Verse 6, says of Abraham: "He believed in the Lord; and He reckoned it to him as righteousness." He believed before the Law came! He was saved from his sin before the Law came! Those who were saved during the era that the Law was in full force in Israel were saved by faith, not by keeping the Law (Ps. 32:1-5; 51:1; Is. 45:22; 53:5-8; 55:1; 61:10; Joel 2:32a).

Another principle: The moral principles of the Law are timeless. They are carried over, and they are reiterated from age to age. Specifically, let's take the Ten Commandments that we were talking about: Nine of the Ten Commandments are restated, in one way or another, in the New Testament as part of God's instruction to the Church. In other words, the New Testament *itself* does not erase the moral Law of God, which is applicable at all times (cf. 1 Cor. 9:21). Instead, it expands and enriches the Law with more significance as it is applied internally by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit (Jer. 31:33; Ezek. 36:27).

We saw, for example, that the Law says, "You shall not commit adultery" (Ex. 20:14). Jesus says, "That's true. But what about 'in your heart'?" (Matt. 5:28). The Law says, "You shall not commit murder" (Ex. 20:13). Jesus says, "That's true. What about being 'angry' with someone?" (Matt. 5:22). It takes it deeper; it takes it further.

So, what *has* changed? Well, you know I'm not going to tell you, "Find a good lamb and bring him next week." We are not going to set up all the sacrifices. What *has* changed?

Well, the ceremonies and rituals of the Law have ended, because they are fulfilled in Christ. This includes the sacrifices (1 Cor. 5:7; cf. Heb. 10:1, 4, 9-10, 14), and the national feasts of Israel. And just a sidebar: This is where some of the weird people like Harold Camping and a lot of others say, "Well, these feasts all teach about Christ, so we should teach Christians to celebrate these feasts." No, no, no. The point is: They point you to Christ! Trust in *Christ*; don't go celebrating the Feast of Tabernacles! And by the way, the Feasts are *not* prophetic. They were like we celebrate Independence Day on the Fourth of July. Why? Because we remember something that happened on July 4th, 1776. We have those things to commemorate, to remember what happened. That's what the feasts were in Israel: to remind them, over and over again, of God's faithfulness—all of which pointed to Christ; Christ has come. Those things are now, not useless, but they are not in *force*. The sacrifices, the feasts, anything specifically related to the Nation of Israel, unless it is reiterated for the Church in the New Testament, is all fulfilled in Christ. Lots and lots of passages (e.g., Col. 2:16-17).

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*That* is the part that has changed. We are no longer "under the Law" (Gal. 5:18) and its requirements for sacrifices because Christ is the "once for all" perfect sacrifice (Rom. 6:10; Heb. 7:27; 9:12; 10:10).

God is *so* specific, *so* detailed, *so* rigorous about holiness—and all of that was to point out that you need a Savior. What a relief—if you have brought sacrifice after sacrifice after sacrifice, year after year after year (Heb. 10:1-4)—to find out: *one*; one sacrifice, "once for all" (1 Pet. 3:18). Do you mean to say I can bring *all* of my sin, and it's *all* forgiven, *all at once*, forever, by something that one guy did? That is *exactly* the message of the Bible! (e.g., Is. 53:11; Rom. 4:7-8; 2 Cor. 5:21; Col. 2:14; Heb. 10:14). That is the "good news" (Is. 52:7; Rom. 10:15)—and that is *really good news*!

So, let's get to where the rubber of your life meets the road of applying the Scriptures to your life (cf. Is. 35:8). How to use the Old Testament, and to make wise applications to your life.

I'm going to give you a little secret: It is *good* to read it (Acts 20:32; 1 Tim. 4:6). It is *good* to know it (Prov. 22:17-18). You *need* to know it; it is *valuable*. Everything in the New Testament builds upon it.

*You have my permission* to read fast through the genealogies. God forgive me; have mercy on my sin-sick soul—you can read through parts of it faster than other parts, and still get to Heaven! You don't have to *know* how to pronounce all those names! That's okay!

It's okay if you notice that some of it kind of overlaps—like, there is First and Second Kings, and First and Second Chronicles, and they overlap; they're intertwined. They are different perspectives of the same historical time—like Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. It's *very good* to get a little help, and study it chronologically.

I am pretty sure that the next sermon series that I do is going to take you through the entire Old Testament. Okay—don't start looking for churches just yet. One book per week—to put it together for you, okay?

So, how to use the Old Testament. Well, take as directly applicable for today everything that is restated in the New Testament. And you say, "Wait a minute! For me to do that, I'm going to have to *know* what the Old Testament says, and I'm going to have to *know* what the New Testament says!" Yeah. Any questions? *That's what we need to do!* It's *all* "profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness."

Now, that's a really good starting point—to know what *is* repeated and what is carried over, but don't take that as an excuse to ignore that first 77 percent of your Bible! Read your Bible!

Do careful research to see if something stated in the Old Testament is elaborated upon or nullified in the New Testament (e.g., Matt. 5:31-32; Heb. 8:13). What you are going to find out is: Some of your *favorite* New Testament passages *refer to the Old Testament!*

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There is some *really good stuff* there. What is probably the best-known Bible verse anywhere? John 3:16, right? I mean, it's on the Martin's license plate, for goodness sake! It is *really* famous! "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life." What is the first word of that sentence? "For." That's a conjunction. That verse did not come wafting out of Heaven, parachuting down one day, and landing on Nicodemus' head. It is in the flow of a context. There is an *animal* mentioned in the context. What animal? Go look it up! I'm not going to give you the *satisfaction* of me telling you. And it is connected to something *very specific* in the *Old Testament*. The best commentary on Scripture is Scripture. Look for the connections.

And by the way, it is okay to use a Study Bible. The footnotes are not inspired, but *oh boy*, they can help you to tap into the thousands and thousands of hours that people who know a lot more than you do have put into that.

Now, here is probably the *ultimate* bottom line of you using the Old Testament: Knowing that God's character never changes, ask why things were so in the Old Testament, and try to understand underlying principles that are timeless.

Nadab and Abihu—struck dead for missing a detail. They didn't *miss* a detail, they *disobeyed* a detail. Does that mean that God strikes with lightning everybody who disobeys Him? No, it doesn't. But it is there for a *purpose* (cf. 1 Cor. 11:10). What is it to tell you? Well, if it is your first day coming to the Tabernacle, and you watch these guys that have prepared for over a week get incinerated in front of your eyes, you're going to say, "I think I'd better read the Book before I do this!" God never changes. So, what does that tell you about God? Whatever that tells you about God that was true about God *then*, it is true about God *now*.

The sacrifices of the Old Testament did not "take away sins" (Heb. 10:4, 11), but they taught you the vivid principle by illustration that a substitutionary sacrifice—an animal instead of you—*could* make atonement (cf. Is. 53:5-8), and that "atonement" for sin requires death (Lev. 17:11; cf. Heb. 9:22). That is "profitable" to "teach" you, to "reprove" you, to "correct" you, to "train you in righteousness."

Other parts of the Law are easier to apply directly to your life. The commandments to "honor your father and your mother" (Ex. 20:12), not "curse" them (Ex. 21:17); to not "commit adultery" (Ex. 20:14)—those show us the principles of God's high priority on a family, and the view of the family.

So, what *is* your attitude toward the Law of God? Is it that His laws are "more desirable than gold, yes, than much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and the drippings of the honeycomb" (Ps. 19:10)?

Do you understand the ultimate verdict of the Law of God? Romans 3:23—"for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." And where is that supposed to lead you? To Romans 6:23—"For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord."

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So, you read the Law of God, and you know: "I am a sinner!" We *all* know that. We *all* know we are sinners (1 Kings 8:46; Matt. 7:11a; Mk. 10:18b). We all know that we deserve separation from God (Ps. 5:4; Is. 59:2), eternal death (Matt. 25:41; 2 Thess. 1:9; Rev. 20:14; 21:8). But as a "free gift," He has given us "eternal life." *Where* is that life, according to Romans 6:23? "In Christ Jesus." So, if *that* is where "eternal life" is (Jn. 3:16; 1 Jn. 5:11), if *that* is where "forgiveness" is (Acts 26:18), *that* is where I need to be! *That's the point!* It drives you to the Savior.

Why did I, as an upstanding 21st-century American, drag you through three months of studying what was revealed on a mountain on the Sinai Peninsula over three thousand years ago? Because it is *relevant*. Because it leads you to Jesus Christ.

Do you know that He *did* keep the Law? He is the only one who ever *did* keep it perfectly (Jn. 8:29, 46; Heb. 7:26; 1 Pet. 1:22). And do you know that He died in the place that you deserved, to pay the penalty for your sins? (Is. 53:5-8; Matt. 20:28; 1 Pet. 2:24)

*That* is the point! That is why, to delight in the Law of God (Prov. 7:1), King David wrote this: Psalm 119:97. Psalm 119 is 176 verses, every single line of which is about God's Word. He says: "O how I love Your law! It is my meditation all the day." I hope you can say these things with him: Verse 113—"I hate those who are double-minded, but I love Your law." Verse 163—"I hate and despise falsehood, but I love Your law." Verse 165—"Those who love Your law have great peace, and nothing causes them to stumble."

He is the man who was called "a man after" God's "own heart" (1 Sam. 13:14; Acts 13:22). Friends, the Long Arm Of The Law reaches through that 3,400 years to bless *you* today. I hope you love it.

Let's pray:

*Our Father, how we thank You that Your Law is true and Your Law is clear. We thank You that Your Word is completed—not only that which leads us to recognize our need for the Savior, but that which introduces us to the Savior. Please, Father, do not let a person leave this room today without knowing "that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures." And let not any soul leave this place in any other condition than trusting fully in what Christ did for us. Thank You for Your truth. In Jesus' name, we ask You to do what needs to be done in our hearts for Your glory. Amen.*