

“Voyaging Towards Values”

Who Needs the Past, Pt. 6

Well, good morning everybody. We are spending the summer looking for ancient solutions to modern problems through the prayer book of God’s people, the Psalms. And perhaps no problem in our nation is more talked about and less understood than the topic of **values**. Everybody wants to talk about values. Especially in an election year. “Vote your values. Vote for the values candidate.” The two political party conventions were held over the last fortnight. Plenty of talk about values in each.

Here’s a campaign quote by the current President, “As long as we are true to our values, loyal to our citizens and faithful to our God, we will not fail.” And here’s a campaign quote by the man who hopes to be the next President, “All our differences hardly measure up to the values we all hold in common.” So why don’t we just flip a coin? I mean, obviously both of these guys are for “our values”. And you will rightly mock the naïveté of that statement – *intended* naïveté of course – and depending on which candidate *you* are supporting, you’ll assume I’m mocking the *other* one!

Actually I’m trying to illustrate the great modern problem with talking about “our values”. Now, before I get too far into that topic, we actually need to read our Psalm for the morning. Psalm 19 is a great

Psalm and it is meant to talk about the two ways of “knowing” God. You can see the break if you look closely. The first half is about knowing God through His natural creation. And the second half is about knowing God through His revealed law – God’s “word”. We could really break it into two sermons, but we’re not going to take the time to do that. Instead, I want to focus on the second half, especially as it relates to where we are in this cultural moment in regards to values. So let’s read it all together and then we’ll break it down.

Psalm 19

*1 The heavens declare the glory of God;
the skies proclaim the work of his hands.
2 Day after day they pour forth speech;
night after night they display knowledge.
3 There is no speech or language
where their voice is not heard.
4 Their voice goes out into all the earth,
their words to the ends of the world.
In the heavens he has pitched a tent for the sun,
5 which is like a bridegroom coming forth from his pavilion, like a
champion rejoicing to run his course.
6 It rises at one end of the heavens
and makes its circuit to the other;
nothing is hidden from its heat.
7 The law of the LORD is perfect, reviving the soul.
The statutes of the LORD are trustworthy,
making wise the simple.
8 The precepts of the LORD are right,
giving joy to the heart.
The commands of the LORD are radiant,
giving light to the eyes.
9 The fear of the LORD is pure,
enduring forever.
The ordinances of the LORD are sure
and altogether righteous.*

*10 They are more precious than gold,
than much pure gold;
they are sweeter than honey,
than honey from the comb.*

*11 By them is your servant warned;
in keeping them there is great reward.*

12 Who can discern his errors?

Forgive my hidden faults.

*13 Keep your servant also from willful sins;
may they not rule over me.*

*Then will I be blameless,
innocent of great transgression.*

*14 May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be pleasing
in your sight,*

O LORD, my Rock and my Redeemer.

Ok, so I said this is speaking to us about values. Let me give you a quick cultural history of contemporary values. I was born near the start of a three decade spree of unlimited personal freedoms. The 60's, 70's and 80's (and really the "60's" as we think of them didn't begin until the late 60's) but these decades were all about getting as much personal freedom – relational, sexual, moral, financial, authoritative – get as much freedom as you could while sneering at all the old values of self-control and chastity and honesty and thrift and modesty and self-denial. Sex is free, greed is good.

And then in the 90's, the entire society began to wake up with a monstrous hangover. We began to realize we were facing a values vacuum. Books in the 90's began to address this. In the political realm; Education Secretary, William Bennet, wrote a best seller in 1993 called *The Book of Virtues*, a collection

of morality stories. In the business world; in 1994 Jim Collins wrote an insanely influential book called *Built To Last* that made the case that many of the best companies adhered to a set of principles called core values.

The resulting values fad swept through corporate America faster than lice through a kindergarten classroom. The result is that today 80% of Fortune 100 corporations publicly flaunt their values. Next time you walk into a store, watch for a values statement on the wall. Enron had one of the most splendid set of corporate values imaginable proudly displayed in the front of their 2000 annual report...right before it was discovered they had bilked millions of investors, defrauded the Securities and Exchange Commission, robbed tens of thousands of employees of their retirement funds, and collapsed in a cloud of dust that brought the Houston economy down with it.

In the religious world, the 90's saw the evangelical church in America up their game in the naked pursuit of political power to force public morality. There was a movement in county after county, state after state, to have the Ten Commandments displayed in courthouses and other government buildings. "Biblical values" became a club to be used to beat society into morality.

Perhaps nobody represented the mingling of “values Christianity” and open political partisanship more than the president of the largest Christian College in the world, Jerry Falwell, Jr. I should say, “former” president. If you’ve read the news this week, I would not recommend the Falwell “family values” package.

Today the emphasis is on “personal values”. We’ve seen enough of the emptiness of the rat-race to know that in order to be happy, you have to live for something besides the corporate bottom line. So you read articles like the recent one from *Psychology Today* called “Six Ways to Discover and Choose Your Core Values”. Here’s an excerpt, “Everybody is different, and what makes one person happy may leave another person feeling anxious or disengaged. Defining your personal values and then living by them can help you to feel more fulfilled and to make choices that make you happy, even if they don’t make sense to other people.”

You see there? Your “personal values”. Who defines values? *You* do. You have to figure out your own moral compass. No pressure! David Brooks is a *New York Times* op-ed columnist, their conservative columnist is how he’s advertised. A quick aside: I like the *New York Times*, and I’ll tell you why; because the *New York Times* is vilified by both the political left *and* the political right, which tells me they must be doing *something* right.

Anyway, in 2013, David Brooks wrote an influential book called *The Road to Character* in which he talked about how he’d come to realize that most of his life had been spend pursuing what he called “resume virtues” – racking up impressive accomplishments – but at what he now realized was the cost of his soul. So he wrote about the importance of pursuing character values like honesty, courage, integrity, determination. It was a #1 bestseller.

And right after he wrote the book, his 27-year marriage broke apart and his personal life went into a tailspin. Just this week I picked up his latest book, in which attempts to make up for the failures of his previous book. He says that he’s come to learn that building character is *not* like going to the gym where through individual focus and willpower you build up your personal values.

He calls the book *The Second Mountain* which is a metaphor for a life of focusing on communal rather than personal values. Let me read you a quote, “When I wrote *The Road to Character*, I was still enclosed in the prison of individualism...I now think the rampant individualism of our current culture is a catastrophe. The emphasis on self - individual success, self-fulfillment, individual freedom, self-actualization – is a catastrophe. I now think that living a good life requires a much vaster transformation. It’s not enough to work on your own weaknesses. The whole cultural paradigm has to shift from the mindset of hyper individualism to the relational mindset of the second mountain.” By which he means cultural values.

And I applaud his change of heart. I agree with him wholeheartedly about the great sin of radical American individualism. And it's bipartisan – you see it on display in the extremes of the abortion rights issue *and* the gun rights issue. Different political leanings, same root sin. Rampant individualism. “Societal consequences be damned, these are *my* rights!” Only I can define my “personal values”.

But I am anticipating Brook's next book in which he spends 1000 pages trying to define what corporate societal values look like! That may be unjust, I haven't finished the book yet. But this brings us back to where we started, whose cultural values? Biden's values? Trump's values? Psalm 19 says, “No.” And I think it shows us three things that will lead us to values that will aid in human flourishing, no matter our politics, no matter our nationality, no matter our generation in time and place. So let's dig in.

The first thing that we're taught is “moral values” must be based on universal moral absolutes. So-called moral values have to be based on universal moral absolutes. Universal is not personal. Universal is not societal. Those are both too subjective. For example, go to an art gallery, what is a painting worth? It's probably has a different worth to you than it does to me. That's why we have auctions. We find the person to whom it's worth the most and we make them buy it. That's what an auction is all about. Maybe I would never bid on it, because it's worth nothing to me. See? Valuing is relative and subjective.

But **Psalm 19:9** says, “*The ordinances of the LORD are sure and altogether righteous.*” Now what does that mean? In English, the word “righteous”, unfortunately, what does it mean? Today, the English word righteous means condescending, looking down your nose. Righteous people look down their nose. But the Hebrew word here means something else.

The Hebrew word actually means “a straightedge tool.” You can't build a building - you couldn't build one 3,000 years ago; you can't build one now - without a straightedge tool. What's a straightedge tool? It's an instrument for measuring the proper angles – measuring what you do. It's an instrument that is *not* your own judgment.

There are so many ways in which the judgement of the naked eye, the intuition, the hunch, can't be trusted. I've been watching this great documentary on the Disney Channel about the geniuses that build the theme parks. And in one they were describing how Cinderella's castle – you know the one – it's just this soaring thing that dominates the center of the park. But it's not as tall as it looks. They use a trick where they lighten the shades of paint as it goes up – darker at the base, lighter at the top – so that your eye is tricked into thinking it's taller than it actually is.

In the same way, you can't build a building by looking at a joint and a corner and saying, "It looks straight to me." You get a straightedge. You get some kind of standard that is *not* your judgment, something that's external to you, something that's perfect, that's unchanging, that's specific.

Now how do you make moral decisions? You need a straightedge. What is your straightedge? Well, most modern people use one of the three "E's." You know what the three "E's" are to make decisions? One is expectations. How do you make moral decisions? What do other people think? What does the Gallup Poll say? What do the experts say? What does my peer group say? What do most people say? That's expectations.

The second "E" is you can use your emotions. It's not just Barbara Mandrell singing, "How can it be wrong if it feels so right?" Emotions; if it feels right do it. The third way you make moral decisions, if you'll admit it, is ease. We tend very often to make moral decisions not on the basis of what we think is right or wrong, but which way is the path of least resistance? Which is the way of least confrontation? Right?

Expectations, emotions, ease; but that's not a straightedge. You need something much more specific than that to make moral decisions, because those things are always changing. Those things are shifting around all the time.

Somebody says, "Well, I'm with the Beatles, all you need is love, man." Well I'm a 90's techno-dance kid, so I say, "What is love? Baby don't hurt me, don't hurt me, no more." Love isn't a straightedge. Certainly not as pop culture defines love. Your emotions aren't a straightedge. The Gallup Poll isn't a straightedge. And the Bible says you will be in a total mess, in a complete swamp, unless you are willing to base all moral values on moral absolutes. So what's the straightedge?

The Bible says, "The law of the *Lord*...The ordinances of the *Lord*...The precepts of the *Lord*...are altogether righteous." In other words, here's the doctrine: The Bible says the law of God is *not* a set of abstractions; it's not an abstract code of conduct. It is actually just the *description* of God's own *moral excellence*. It's the depiction of God's own glorious goodness; and therefore, it is also a description of your own humanity and the reality of what this great Creator has created.

Let me give you a quick example of how this works. Ask somebody, "Do you believe lying is bad?" Let's be real, real, real concrete, imagine you're the public school teacher of a bunch of at-risk 8th graders who lie cheat and steal with abandon. It's the example they see all around them from their parents to their peers. So you want to convince them that lying is bad. How will you do it?

“Well,” somebody says, “what you tell people is that lying is bad because it hurts your conscience. You’ll feel bad.” These eighth-grade kids will sit there and say, “I know the teacher is stupid, because I remember in sixth grade when I used to lie, it used to bother my conscience. Now it doesn’t bother it at all. If I don’t mind, it doesn’t mater.”

Ok, then tell them, “You shouldn’t lie because lying isn’t loving to people,” but don’t forget what we just said. You can define love any old way you want. A lot of people have lied in the name of love. I dealt once with a Christian family and the doctor had told them that the grandmother – the matriarch – was going to die and the family refused to tell her that she was going to die. And as a pastor I said, “You *have* to tell her she is going to die. She needs to get her heart in order, her relationships in order.” They said, “Oh no, pastor, it wouldn’t be *loving* to tell her.” Love is totally subjective.

Here’s another one: Let’s just say, “Lying is wrong because it’s bad for society.” Now this is true. It’s true. If everybody lies, and by the way, the Communists knew this because one of the reasons why communism collapsed was because everybody lied. When you turned on the TV and you watched the news, you knew they were lying. People were taught to lie everywhere, government agencies, businesses, everybody lied. And when there is no societal expectation for truth, the economy can’t

work, and the civil government can’t work. That’s what happened to the Communists...just the...just the Communists...

It’s true. Lying is bad for society. It’s terrible for society. But do you think *that* will help those eighth-graders? I can just see the eighth-graders sitting there going, “Okay, let me get this straight. If I cheat on the next test, all of western civilization will come crashing down around my head. Come on! I can get away with it. It’s not going to hurt anything.”

When you base your moral values on anything but moral absolutes, the *nature* of God, the way things are, if you base it on conscience, if you base it on feelings, if you base it on the three “E’s,” if you base it on some content-less idea of love, if you base it on social utility, first of all, your theory is theoretically shallow. It doesn’t explain things. It says if everybody lies society won’t work, but *why* won’t society work? Why?

See, the Bible goes deeper than the social theories. The Bible says, “Here’s why it won’t work: Because God tells the truth. And because God is a truth-teller, the world that God created doesn’t work if you lie. Because *God’s* a truth-teller, He created a reality so that when you lie, you set up strains in the structure of life that will lead to breakdown. That is a theory that is adequate; it’s deep.

Any other way of talking about why lying is wrong doesn't go deep enough. It doesn't explain why. It's theoretically inadequate. Not only that, any other way of basing moral values is *pragmatically* ineffective. Nobody is going to stop lying if all you do is say, "Oh, it's not loving; it'll hurt society."

The only proper moral restraint is to be able to say to somebody, "God tells the truth, and God has, therefore, built your heart and built our society and built the world for truth-tellers, and if you don't tell the truth, as it says in **Proverbs 19:9**, "*A false witness will not go unpunished, and whoever pours out lies will perish.*" That's why you don't lie. It's wrong because it's based on a *universal* moral absolute. It's based on the nature of God and the fabric of reality, and when you lie you cut your own throat whether you realize it in the moment or not.

There is no other way of *grounding* people in values than that. Ground it in social theory, ground it in your emotions, ground it in your feelings. Everybody will just run on by. Everybody will laugh in your face. Therefore, the Bible says the only straightedge is that which issues from the Lord, moral absolutes that issue from the Lord. It's *of* the Lord.

Let's move on, but just one quick point. What about the modern value that it's wrong to impose your values on other people? I know that's a very popular train of thought, but again it falls down, just on the basis of reason. If all values are personal and relative, *why* is it wrong to impose your values on other people?

As soon as you start talking about tolerance being something we must all observe, you have just described a universal absolute that everybody has to obey, whether or not it's something you feel. Where do you get the basis for that? We do this almost every week, but a moral relativist is an impossible position to be in. Just ask the question: "Is the statement that all morals are relative, relative itself?" It's a logic trap. Of course most people aren't really interested in what's logical, so you won't really get anywhere.

But the fact is, moral values have *got* to be grounded in moral absolutes, or we live in an impossible situation. "The law of the Lord is *perfect*...The ordinances of the Lord are sure and righteous." But let's not dismiss the toleration question just yet. Because of course, anyone can show you examples from history in which people claiming moral absolutes have in fact inflicted great evil and pain on others. How do we answer that?

This is kind of a brief point, but we have to point it out. **Secondly, Submission to God’s moral absolutes does not enslave; it liberates.** It says, “The law of the LORD is perfect, *reviving* the soul...The precepts of the LORD are right, giving *joy* to the heart.” One of the central tenets of modern philosophy is that it’s oppressive and it’s enslaving to submit to somebody else or some other body of values. Every human being needs to be free to fashion his or her own set of moral values; therefore, to have to *submit* to something is oppressive.

The Bible says, “Not at all. If you submit yourself to the moral absolutes of God, it actually brings liberation.” And here’s why. It says, **v.7**, “*The law of the LORD is perfect, reviving the soul...*”. Let’s put it this way: The Bible teaches us, and *common sense* teaches us, that real freedom is always found in restrictions. Real freedom only happens when you find the right restrictions. A life without restrictions is not liberation, but always leads to destruction.

Let me give you an example. Allow me to introduce you to my daughter’s new friend. She’s off at college, and the first thing she did is get a pet to keep her company in her room. So meet Peter Parker. Now, Peter is restricted to his 3-gallon fish tank. But let’s say that Anika decides that’s oppressive and she decides to take Peter out of his tank and give him free roam around the room, around the whole house even!

Of course, you’ve immediately begun to kill him. But put him back in the “restrictive” tank and he immediately begins to breath again. Starts coming back to life. He begins to experience liberty again. See, his liberty was destroyed out of the water until you put him back in. You get the fish into the right environment and it has freedom. In the wrong environment it has no freedom.

Let me ask you a question; What do a polar bear in Miami and a jogger on Venus have in common? The answer? They’re both dying. Why? Because they’re in the wrong environment. See, the jogger is out there jogging along, but his lungs aren’t built to process the Venusian ammonia gas atmosphere, and the polar bear is not able to handle 100 degrees in the shade, so they’re dying. Get them out of that environment and they revive. Put them in the right environment and they revive.

I was talking to a woman in the church who told me that professionally she just was going nowhere for years. She worked for a big corporation and she chafed. Finally she went into business for herself, and everything changed. She was an entrepreneur. That was her spirit. She chafed working under other people. She was frustrated under the restrictions. She was just *made* to be self-employed. That was the environment in which she really took off.

Now don't you see? What do these all have in common? They were not able to be free...the polar bear, the entrepreneur, the Venusian jogger, the fish...until they found the right restrictions. For the fish to be liberated, he has to say *no* to walking. The polar bear has to say *no* to Miami. The entrepreneur has to say *no* to Dell. There is no freedom unless you know how to restrict. There is no freedom unless you find the *right* restrictions. There's no freedom without "no."

To say that freedom is the ability to have no restrictions at all makes absolutely no sense. Let me tell you, if that's true physically, if that's even true vocationally, it has to be true spiritually. The Bible says there is only one proper environment for you spiritually and personally to become everything a human being is supposed to be. That is the environment of the *commandments* of God. "The law of the LORD is perfect, reviving the soul." You need the moral authority of God, and you need the restrictions of God to revive yourself.

And there are thousands of people, and plenty of them watching this sermon right now, who can say, "It wasn't until I said "no" to things that God's law said no to, and it wasn't until I came in under the commandments of God, that my marriage revived, that my work life revived, that my self-esteem revived, that my psyche revived." The law of the

Lord is perfect. So the second point is that when you submit to these moral absolutes, they are not destructive, but they liberate.

So first, your so-called moral values have to be based on absolutes, and those moral absolutes do not destroy, but they liberate. Now, there are three points to this sermon. You just heard two, and up to now, we might assume that what I'm saying, and what the Bible is saying, is that the way to answer the search for values is just go back to the old Ten Commandments. Just go back to "traditional values." Let's just get our society back there. Is that all it's saying? Is that all the Bible says? No. Remember, that's what certain branches of Christianity tried in the 90's. Didn't work. Can't work. Because the third thing this passage teaches us and the Bible teaches us is...

The law of God, the moral absolutes of God, will destroy you unless they have assumed the right role in your life. Listen very carefully. Up to now, maybe all I've shown you is that the law of God is real, and secondly, that the law of God is necessary. It's real so you owe God obedience, and it's necessary so you need obedience, but it's not as simple as that. I'm here to tell you that you can admire the law of God, and you can love the law of God, and you can obey the law of God, and have it *destroy* you if you don't understand the role it's *supposed* to play.

The NBA playoffs are going on. Imagine a team had the best point guard in the league *and* the best center. That's a tough combination to beat. But have them switch roles. Put the big man on the outside and the little guy in the paint. They won't win a single game. Terrific athletes, wrong roles. Any good coach can tell you that. And I'm here to tell you that you can love the law of God and try to obey the law of God, but if you don't understand its proper *role*, the role it's supposed to play in the human life, it can ruin you. It can destroy you.

Here's what the role is. You have to stand back for a minute and look at the whole sweep of Psalm 19. We said that it's divided into two parts. The first six verses tell us that if you just look at the heavens, and you look at the sun and the moon and the stars, they tell you that there's a God. What Psalm 19 says in verses 1–6 is that if you listen, even though there are no words, the sun, the moon, the stars, the spacious firmament is telling you there's a great glorious Creator behind it all. *But* Psalm 19 shows us that the natural revelation that comes to us through creation is not sufficient to get us to know God *personally*. In fact, the way v.6 describes the sun, it could just as easily be talking about the Roman deity, Apollos.

In other words, nature tells you there's "a" god, but not "the" God. Now the way this Psalm gets that across is not that obvious reading it in English, but in

Hebrew it's stunning. In the first six verses, the name for God that's used is *Elohim*, translated "God". In the last eight verses, from verses 7–14, the only name for God that's used is the Hebrew word *Yahweh*, which is translated "the LORD". What does that mean? It means this: The word *Elohim* is a generic name for God. The generic name means "the divine one, the great one." But the word *Yahweh* is the personal name God revealed to Moses in the burning bush that He gives to the people He calls His own.

It's roughly analogous to you coming up to me and saying, "Hello, Dr. Scoma." And I say, "Please, just call me Anthony." When you say, "Call me by my first name," what you're doing is saying, "I want a relationship with you. I don't want you just interact with me in a professional way, I want to be a friend." So in verses 1–6, by using the word *Elohim* again and again and again, the psalmist is saying: "Look, it's great to use your reason, it's great to see the stars and the moon, it's great for you to infer, to deduce that there is a God, but that will never get you to know Him personally. If you want to know God personally, you have to go to His revealed Word. You have to go to the prophets, to the Bible. You have to go to the law." Because there in verses 7–12, he starts saying, "If you want to know the Lord, if you want to know God personally, you have to look at the perfect law, and you have to look at the righteous law."

But now look, even *that's* not enough, because you see, there's a wonderful psychological order to things. The first six verses say, "You look in the sky and you'll see God in general, but you'll never know Him personally." Then the next series of verses say, "You look in His Word and you see how holy He is, and how perfect He is." But then look what happens in verse 12, suddenly the psalmist says, (v.12-13), "*Who can discern his errors? Forgive my hidden faults. Keep your servant also from willful sins; may they not rule over me...*"

Why is this the right psychological order? Here's what happens. This will *always* happen to you. The more you look at the law of God trying to know Him...I've seen this happen a million times. People begin to wake up. They say, "I need God. I need God in my life. I need a faith." That's why some of you are here. So many people have a general belief, or maybe they have no belief, but then suddenly they realize for various reasons, "I need God in my life. I need something more than I have." So you start going to church, and you start reading the Bible, and you start seeing what the Bible says.

And when you read all the things the Bible says, "Be generous, be honest, be loving, be compassionate, be humble, be wise, be gentle, be powerful, be approachable, be courageous," and you read all that, and you nod your head, but all it does is start to

dishearten you. It starts to make you get tired. And this is what happens to the psalmist. He looks at the law and he says, "The law of God is perfect, and it's altogether righteous, and it's radiant." And then you *have* to suddenly begin to say, "But wait a minute. I'm imperfect. I'm unrighteous. I'm confused." The law of God will always do that to you.

Now the first thing I want to tell you is that's *good*, because the first role of the law of God, as God intended, the first role of the law of God in your life is to swamp you just like that. You're *supposed* to feel like that, because Christianity is for moral failures and only for moral failures. Do you hear me? Jesus said, (Luke 5:32) "*I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.*"

What does that mean? He says that if you think you're righteous, if you look at the law of God and say, "I obey that. I have obeyed that all of my life. I've always kept the Ten Commandments," if you look at the moral law of God and it doesn't swamp you, if it makes you feel righteous instead of like a terrible sinner, if you feel you're a moral success, if you *don't* think you're a moral failure, you're not a Christian. You're not. Jesus says, "I didn't come for people who think they're righteous. I didn't come for anybody like that."

Christianity is for moral failures and *only* for people who know they're moral failures, and the way you find that out is the law comes in and swamps you. You see what the law of God requires, and it's wonderful. You say, "*Of course* we should be as generous as that. Of course we should be as *compassionate* as the law says. Of course we should be as *kind* as the law says. Of course we should be as *honest* as the law says. Of course we should be as *principled* as the law says. But I'm not, and I never will be. Not in this life."

That's good. Unless the law is doing that to you right now, the law is going to kill you. If it's making you smug, it means you're not understanding it. If anybody here does not see that they're a moral failure and thinks, "I'm a pretty decent person; I live according to the Ten Commandments and the laws of decency," you haven't looked at them very closely, and they are going to strangle you, because unless the law of God plays the *right* role in your life, you will be destroyed.

And the first role of the law of God is it should show you that you're a sinner. Paul says in Galatians chapter 3 that the law of God is a schoolmaster to lead us to Christ. The job of the law is to show us that we need exactly what happens here in Psalm 19.

Because, you see, as the psalmist looks at the law and says how perfect it is, how wonderful it is, then suddenly by verse 12 he says, "Oh my gosh! I'm full of flaws. I'm full of errors." And then at the very end, he starts crying out for what? The last two words, "*My redeemer*." That's the job of the law. The job of the law is to say, "You're a moral failure, and you need a redeemer."

That's the first role. Is it playing that role in your life? The second role the law of God should play in your life is it should push you to see what Jesus has done for you. It should get you to see who the Redeemer is. That's what Psalm 19 does. It pushes you to say, "I need a redeemer." Let's go back to Paul, this verse, if you get it in your soul you can live off it for the rest of your life. **Galatians 4:4-5**, says, "*But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law, to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons.*"

The Christian reads the law in an utterly unique way. Tell me if this is how you read the law. When you look at all those wonderful, terrifying things the law says...be generous, be courageous, be humble, be loving, be wise, be gentle, be approachable, be powerful, all those things, they're wonderful and they're terrifying.

A Christian reads all that and says, “My Savior has done this. Every one of these things. He has done it *for* me. He was born under the law. That means he was responsible to the law, and he utterly fulfilled it so that we might not *earn*, but *receive* the rights of sonship. He lived the life I should have lived, and he paid the debt I owed.”

Everybody in this room knows they should be perfect. Please hear me. You *know* it. It’s an emotional reality, and apart from the Christian gospel, there are only two ways to deal with it. The first way is to try to kill it, to destroy your own moral sensitivity, to say, “Nobody is perfect. I’m better than most people. At least I’m better than...” You just try to kill your perfectionism. You just try to kill it. Attack your own moral sensitivity. Go ahead. That’s one way you can do it.

The other way is to let it drive you so that you *have* to achieve the perfect body, the perfect relationship, the perfect record, the perfect job, live in the perfect home, have perfect moments, and so on. So you can either deal with this emotional reality by trying to kill your own moral sensitivity, or by letting it drive you into the ground, *or*...and the only other alternative is this: Christianity alone refuses to minimize this reality that you know you should be perfect. It addresses it.

It says, the gospel is you must never trust in anything that you are doing, can do, will do, or have done, but to say, “Lord, accept me strictly, and fully, and completely, because of what your Son, Jesus Christ, did for me.” He fulfilled the law. When you look at the law, you see he has *done* it. He has done every bit of it. Is that the role the law plays? Do you read it that way? First, the law is there to swamp you, secondly, the law is there to show you what Jesus has done for you, and thirdly and lastly, the role of the law is to show you how to give *pleasure* to God.

Now think. The purpose of the law is not a ladder to heaven: “If I do these things God will accept me.” The purpose of the law is not pragmatic: “If I do these things then God will help me.” Oh no. The law will grind you if that’s the role it plays in your life. No. But if you see the purpose of the law is to show you that you’re a moral failure, and secondly, to show you what Jesus has done for you, then when you know he has done this for you, when you’ve received him as Savior, the purpose of the law is to show you how to give God pleasure.

Let me put it this way. Here’s how you know you’re in love with somebody: You begin to experience their desires, and the things that delight them, and the things they want, as *commands*. Oh, they’re not coercive. You *want* to find those things out. You want to know what pleases the beloved. You want to know what delights the beloved.

And when you find out, his or her wish is your command. When you're in love, you experience the things that give the beloved pleasure as commands, and you *love* to fulfill them. Here's how you know you're in love: You know you're in love when the pleasure of *giving* pleasure is greater than the pleasure of *taking* pleasure.

There are two things that happen when you begin to find the pleasure of giving pleasure: you change and your relationship deepens. Now, it's the same thing with God. What is the law of God? The law of God is a list of things that give Him delight. Do you want a relationship with God? *Why* should you obey the Bible?

Why should you obey the Ten Commandments? Why should you confess your sins? Why should you wrestle like crazy to be as holy as you can be in every part of your life? Not to get to heaven, not so God will answer your prayers, but because you want to know God better. The purpose of the law is so you can know God more intimately. The purpose of the law is to get the pleasure of giving pleasure, which is the greatest pleasure there is.

What is the purpose of obeying God? To know Him. Not to manipulate Him, not to pull strings to get Him to do things; God is already willing to do everything for you.

He's saying, "Obey me so we can be friends. Obey me so I can be your Father. Obey me so I can pour myself into you the way I want and the way that you desperately need."

The law is utterly different to a Christian than to anybody else. The rebel *despises* the law. The moralist *fears* the law. The Christian *delights* in the law. It's sweeter than honeycomb. May the words of my mouth and the meditations of all of our hearts be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, our Rock and our Redeemer.

Let's pray...