

VIDEO SERMON SERIES

Sermons on the Heidelberg Catechism

by Rev. Bartel Elshout

*Sermon #42, Lord's Day 34,
Introductory to God's Law*

The Transcript of God's Mind



The John Knox Institute
of Higher Education

John Knox Institute of Higher Education

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*Sermon #42, Lord's Day 34,
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The Transcript of God's Mind

Matthew 22, verses 37 thru 40

i. Introduction

- 1. The Revelation of God's Good Pleasure**
- 2. The Foundation of the Gospel**
- 3. The Norm for the Christian's Walk**

Introduction

Congregation, a couple of weeks ago, we began the third section, or division, of the Heidelberg Catechism, which deals with Gratitude. As you know, boys and girls, you know that too, that the Catechism begins by telling us that in order to enjoy the only comfort in life and death, to know that I do not belong to myself, but to my faithful Savior, Jesus Christ, to know that he has given himself as a sacrifice for my sin; in order to know that and to experience that comfort, we must know how great our sins and miseries are; secondly, how we may be delivered from that misery; and thirdly, how we are to show gratitude to God for that deliverance.

And so, the section of Gratitude is a major section of the Heidelberg Catechism. It begins in Lord's Day 32, all the way to Lord's Day 52. Twenty-one Lord's Days are devoted to it. And the focus of that last section of the Heidelberg Catechism is on two essential components of the Christian life; two essential components of what that life of gratitude looks like; the life by which the Christian demonstrates his gratitude to God for having delivered him from his misery through the Lord Jesus Christ and his accomplished work.

And so, we're going to focus on the law, and on prayer; or, precept and prayer—two Ps—precept and prayer, because those are the essential components of the Christian life. The Christian's life is an obedient life and a prayerful life, and those two belong inseparably together. When we, by the grace of God, endeavor to live an obedient life, we will be painfully aware of our deficiency, that we have but a small beginning of that new obedience. And that will bring us to our knees to

seek the grace we need to live a God-honoring, a Christ-honoring life.

And so, that's why Lord's Day 34, which we hope to consider next week, the Lord willing, from Lord's Days 34 to 44, we're going to look at the Law of God. We're going to look at the Ten Commandments. And it's not by mistake that the Heidelberg Catechism deals with the law in all of its detail in the section of Gratitude, rather than the section on Misery. There was a brief reference to the law, when the Question was asked, how do we know our misery? And the Answer was, by the law of God (Question and Answer #3). But it's now in the section of Gratitude that we have a full exposition of what the law is all about, a full exposition of the Ten Commandments.

Because, you see, it is not until then, it is not until we have found salvation in Christ, that we have found redemption in Him, the pardon of our sins, that we will have the freedom to live a God-glorifying life. That's what it says in Psalm 130. I've preached about this already; I've mentioned it often. That's where we beautifully see those three components together: "Lord, if thou shouldst mark my iniquity, who shall stand?" We have no standing before God, we stand guilty before him. "But with thee"—the very God against whom we have sinned—"with thee there is forgiveness, in order that thou mayest be feared." And so, the beauty is, in that structure, is that it teaches us that the Christian is able to fear God without the fear of losing his salvation. That's why God wants his people to be assured of their pardon. And being assured of our pardon in Christ, we can then fear God without fear—that means the fear of ultimately losing our salvation. And so, the Christian lives a godly life; the Christian lives an obedient life, not to secure God's favor, but as an expression of love towards God for having redeemed and saved such a wretch as we are.

And so, before we begin that exposition, however, of the Ten Commandments, in Lord's Days 34 through 44, I want to, first of all, preach an introductory sermon about the law of God. Because we need to have a correct biblical understanding about the law of God. We can't have a situation that I encountered many years ago when I lived in Denver, Colorado. I was part of what was called "The Reformed Round Table," and there were people there who had a very Antinomian spirit. I remember a man, who, getting up, he said, "I don't want to hear about the law. The law is a dirty word to me." That's as if to suggest that, when we are Christians, we are done with the law. Congregation, we could not be more mistaken.

And so, we're going to do this by way of the famous passage of Matthew 22, verses 37 through 40. So please turn there with me. And let me begin with verse 34 for the sake of context, Matthew 22: "But when the Pharisees had heard that he had put the Sadducees to silence, they were gathered together." The Sadducees had tempted him with that question, What about a woman who was married seven times? Whose husband would she be in glory? And of course, Christ answered by saying, There would be no marriage. And so, the Pharisees realized that Christ had put them to silence. "Then one of them"—which was a Pharisee—"which was a lawyer"—a student of the law, a scribe, who devoted himself to the study of the laws of Moses, he—"asked him a question, tempting him"—again, trying to trip him up—"and saying, Master, which is the great commandment in the law?" And you need to know that, among the Pharisees and scribes, this was a topic they were constantly debating—which is the great commandment of the law? Some said it was the commandment of the sabbath; and others said it was the commandment of circumcision. They were debating this all the time. And so now, they said to Jesus, "Master, which is the greatest commandment in the law?" And here comes his answer:

"Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets." (Matthew 22, verses 37 to 40).

And so, congregation, here, Christ, the living Word of God himself, the author of Scripture; Christ, who is the lawgiver, who, as the Angel of the Lord, gave the law to Israel at Mount Sinai; here, Christ gives an extraordinary answer to the scribes and Pharisees about the very essence of the law. And with God's help, I want to point out to you three things about that law.

In the first place, that this law is *The Revelation of God's Good Pleasure*. The law reveals to us, and we will see, the very purpose for which God created us, profoundly stated in this passage. Secondly, we will see that the law is *The Foundation of the Gospel*. Once in a while I will remind you of that before I read the law, is that the law defines the contents of the gospel. And thirdly, that the law is *The Norm for the Christian Walk*. So, the law of God, which, as the Puritans were fond of saying, "The Law of God is *the Transcript of God's Mind*." So, in the law, God reveals his thinking. In the law, God reveals the purpose for which he created us. So, we're going to look at the law, as *The Revelation of God's Good Pleasure*, as *The Foundation of the Gospel*, and, *The Norm for the Christian Walk*.

1. The Revelation of God's Good Pleasure

What's really noteworthy, here, congregation, that contrary to what is often said, is that this is not a summary of the law. Christ does not even remotely suggest that this is the summary of the law. And how can I say that with such certainty? Well, first of all, he doesn't use that language. But he actually makes a remarkable statement after he gives those two fundamental commandments, which come from the Old Testament, by the way. The commandment to love God with heart, soul, and mind, you find that in Deuteronomy 6, verse 4 and 5. There, we read, "Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD: and thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might." And then, "the second is like unto it," that we find in Leviticus 19, verse 18, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself: I am the LORD." So here, Christ, who is the living Word of God himself, who is the Lawgiver, reaches back to those two foundational statements, and he is saying to the scribes and Pharisees, This is the law in its very essence. Because, what does he say about it? He says, "On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets." Now, the expression, "The law and the prophets," is a very well-known Hebrew summary term for the entire body of truth as we find it in the Old Testament Scriptures. In Mark, in a parallel account—and if you want to jot this down, the parallel account in Mark is Mark 12, verse 28 through 34; and also in Luke 10, you will find a reference to it, in verses 25 through 28. But in Mark, Christ is saying, "There is none other commandment greater than these" (Mark 12, verse 31).

And so, congregation, even logically, this cannot be a summary of the law. Because the law, even as we read it every Sunday morning, the Decalogue, the Ten Commandments, as God gave that law, a Christ gave that law on Mount Sinai, that law consists of eight prohibitions. It's primarily negative. How can we have a summary of that law which has not one negative reference in it? And so, I am convinced, congregation, unless I am proven otherwise, that out of the mouth of the Lawgiver, we have the law in its original form, in its original essence. This is the law that God wrote upon the hearts of Adam and Eve when he created them in his image. Because before they sinned, when they were perfect, when they had a perfect heart that was perfectly inclined to know, love, and serve God, Adam and Eve did not need any prohibitions. And so, the Law that God gave them, the law that he wrote upon their hearts, that law was entirely positive. It's only when man becomes a sinner, a transgressor of the law, and when Christ, the Lawgiver, as the Angel of the Covenant, when he gives that law to Israel, he now gives the law to a sinful people, who are naturally inclined to break the law. And now, he gives it primarily in a negative form, "Thou shalt

not.” But this is the law in its original form. That’s why Christ says, “On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.” He is saying, this is the foundation of all truth that we find in the Work of God, the whole body of revealed truth pivots on those two commandments.

Because, as I’ve said, congregation, what God reveals in that law is the purpose for which he created us. And what is that purpose? That purpose is to live in a love relationship with him, and a love relationship with our fellow man. And so, God himself, who is a relational being, a covenantal being, created us as relational creatures. A God of love created us in his image to find our fulfillment in loving the God who made us, and loving our fellow man as ourselves. That’s what Christ is expressing here. “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind,” and in Mark and in Luke, is added, “with all thy strength.”

So, what does that mean, boys and girls? That means that God created us with the capacity to love him with every fiber of our being. God created us to find our fulfillment in loving the very God who created us, who created us in his image; who, as a God of love, created us with the capacity to love him in return; but also, to love our fellow human beings. So two relationships; two foundational relationships—a relationship with God, and our relationship with our fellow man. And that’s why even the Ten Commandments are divided into two table, as we will see. The first four Commandments deal with our relationship with God; and then the second table, numbers 5 through 10, are how we are to interact with our fellow man. And the tragedy of our fall is, that now we are lawbreakers. The tragedy of our fall is that rather than loving our God and loving our neighbor, we are now inclined to hate God and to hate our neighbor. As fallen creatures, we have become lovers of ourself, and therefore no longer have any love for our neighbor. Fallen man is preoccupied with himself, preoccupied with pleasing himself, doing his will rather than God’s will.

But the purpose for which God made us—let me say it again; and that’s what God reveals here; that’s why the Puritans called the law “The transcript of the mind of God”; that’s why the law reveals to us how God thinks about us. And so, as human beings, we cannot find our fulfillment until we begin to love God again, and we begin to love our neighbor as ourselves. When those two relationships begin to function again.

There’s something else that I want to emphasize here. I think it’s so extremely important in grasping for us the significance of the law. As I’ve said here many times, congregation, God’s ultimate goal, in all that he does, is the glory of his only begotten Son. It is by his Son and for his Son that he created the universe. And ultimately, it will be by his Son and for his Son that the entire work of redemption will be accomplished. So in all that the Father does, he aims for the glory of his only begotten Son in whom he is well pleased.

Now, let’s relate this to the law. Because, when we are commanded to love God with heart, soul, mind, and strength, how are we to love him? We are to love him as he has revealed himself in his only begotten Son. God is only knowable in his Son. “No man has seen God at any time,;” John said, in John 1, verse 18, but he that is in the bosom of the Father, he who is the living Word of God, he has declared him unto us. So for us, as human beings, God is only knowable in his Son. That’s why it was God the Son who communed with our first parents. It was the Word. “In the beginning was the Word” (John 1;1). It was the Word who walked in the garden. It was the Word who communed with Adam, and Eve. And they loved God as he revealed himself in his only begotten Son. Because all of God’s dealings, all of God’s dealings with man are always in and through his Son. So we are to love him, as he has revealed himself in his only begotten Son.

And why must we love our neighbor? Because God created us in the image of his Son. That’s clearly taught by Scripture. That’s the ultimate goal of redemption. And so, as God’s children, we have been chosen in Christ to be made like unto him. We have been chosen in him to be conformed

to his image. Why?—because God created us in his image. Adam and Eve, as the son and daughter of God, bore the image of the eternal Son of God. That's why man was the crown jewel of God's creation. God beheld his entire created work, and he beheld in all of creation the glory of his only begotten Son, but especially in man, as the bearer of the image of his only begotten Son.

And so, why are we commanded to love our neighbor as ourselves? Because our neighbor—and now, I'm thinking of the pre-fall situation—our neighbor is created in the image of God's Son. So when we love our neighbor, we are also honoring God's Son. We are honoring God's Son when we love him with heart, soul, mind, and strength; and we honor God's Son when we love our neighbor as ourselves.

And that's why, congregation, that's why sin is so very heinous in the sight of God. That's why sin is so vile. That's why sin provokes him to the very core of his being. Because you cannot offend God more than by offending his Son. That's what sin is ultimately all about. When we transgress God's law, when we disobey God's law, ultimately, we are dishonoring the Son of God. Because when we sin, we are dishonoring the written Word of God. And congregation, when we dishonor the written Word of God, we are dishonoring the living Word of God. And that's what makes sin so abominable; that's what makes sin so vile in the sight of God.

And now, the amazing wonder is that even though we so greatly offend God by transgressing his law, is that the God against whom we have sinned, the God whose Word we dishonor, the God whose law we transgress, that that God has purposed eternally that he would actually, that he would save and redeem the transgressors of his very own law. That's the wonder of the coming of Christ in the world.

2. The Foundation of the Gospel

And that brings us to our second point. Because, we have to realize that when man fell, God did not change. God's law did not change. What God requires of man has not changed. Because that law which is a revelation of God's thinking, the transcript of his mind, that law is as eternal as God is eternal; that law is as unchangeable as God is unchangeable. That's why, ultimately, in glory, God's redeemed people will forever live in perfect obedience to that law; in glory, in that new heaven, in which righteousness will dwell, in that new blessed reality that all God's redeemed people look forward to; in that new heaven and that new earth, this law, this unchangeable law, the transcript of God's mind, will be the everlasting standard by which God's redeemed people will live. And so, forever, God's redeemed people will love God in Christ, who will dwell among us, will love him with heart, soul, and mind, and strength; will love him with every fiber of their being; will love him perfectly, and there will be perfect love with all our fellow redeemed souls. Because it is the eternal law of God.

Now, the wonder, the wonder of the gospel, the wonder of the message of the Scriptures is that God, against whom we have sinned, whose law we transgress, whose Son we dishonor, that the offended Lawgiver provides salvation for law breakers. That's the astounding wonder of the gospel, congregation. Because God righteously could have dismissed with the entire human race. But then, he would have denied his very own character. God cannot deny himself. And precisely because he is a God of love, therefore, he purposed eternally that he would provide a way, whereby lawbreakers, we who offend him, we who grieve him, we who by nature, trample upon his law; whereby lawbreakers could be reconciled to himself.

And that's why, in the wilderness, when God gave his law to the people of Israel, when did he give them that law? He gave them that law after he redeemed them. First he redeemed them, and brought them out of Egypt, and set them at liberty, and then, to his redeemed people, he gives the

Ten Commandments. “I am the LORD your God,” who has brought you out of the bondage of Egypt; and because I am your God, therefore, “You shall have no other gods before me,” and so forth, and all the Ten Commandments that then follow.

But what God also did, knowing that he gave that law to a redeemed people, who during those forty years, would have this tragic track record of constantly dishonoring him, he also gave them the ceremonial law. He gave them that amazing system of bloody sacrifices to teach them that, on the basis of shed blood, it was possible for him to be the God of this sinful people. That’s why, in order for them to realize the necessity of that entire system of bloody sacrifices, he first makes them tremble at Mount Sinai. He first impresses upon them who he is in all his majesty, and all of his glory. And judgment is executed upon them when, in their foolishness, they danced around the golden calf, and when Moses came down, and when he cast to the ground those two table that God had written with his very own finger. That alone tells you how significant the law is to the heart and mind of God. He did not entrust it to a man. He did not dictate to Moses. No, he wrote that law with his own finger, and he did it twice. But then, then Moses unveils to them this amazing system of bloody sacrifices. And by means of that system God wanted to teach his sinful people how he could be their God, that even though they were lawbreakers, and they so often grieved and offended him, that he had provided a way, wherein by he, the Lawgiver, whom they offended time and again, whereby he could nevertheless be their God; whereby he could pardon their iniquity. That’s why Paul, in Galatians 3, calls the ceremonial law—that’s the ceremonial law—he calls it “a schoolmaster unto Christ” (Galatians 3:24). And so, God used the ceremonial law to teach the people of Israel the gospel; to teach them the foundational truths of the gospel; to teach them, first of all, that as lawbreakers, they had forfeited the right to live. That’s what the shedding of blood powerfully teaches them. Every time they would see an animal die, they knew that they should have died, but that instead God had provided a substitute taking their place. So that a God who cannot compromise could yet be gracious to his sinful people on the basis of shed blood.

And what that blood did, you see, that precious blood—of course, the blood of animals could accomplish nothing—but that blood pointed to Christ. That whole system was a schoolmaster unto Christ, to teach them the gospel; to teach them the foundational truth, that the God whom we have offended, the Lawgiver whom we have offended, that he can be gracious to us lawbreakers on the basis of shed blood, which pointed to the shed blood of his only begotten Son in the fulness of time.

And so, what we learn from the ceremonial law, which is, by the way, God’s exposition of the first table of the law—the civil law is God’s exposition of the second table of the law; how we are to live with our neighbor—but the ceremonial law is God’s exposition of the first table. That’s how he taught the people of Israel how to love him, how to serve him, and how to walk in his ways. And what we see in that remarkable system is that God, reverently speaking, immerses his own law in the blood of that sacrifice. That’s it. And what you get, when that law is immersed in the blood of the sacrifice, what you get is the gospel. That’s the gospel—the good news, the glad tidings of the gospel, is that the law of God has been immersed in the blood of Christ. And that blood silences the curse of the law. Because that’s the curse that rests upon us. That’s the nature of our offense, that God can only respond in one way to sin, and that is by pronouncing upon us his curse—the curse, which is the opposite of the gospel; the curse, which is God’s negative word; the curse, when it rests upon us, means that unless there is a way found in which my sin is dealt with, that curse will pursue me right into hell. And by the shedding of that blood, the blood of Christ ultimately, that curse was silenced—the law immersed in the blood of Christ.

And then we get good news, good news, because of what happens in the fulness of time. And that is so amazing, congregation. What happens in the fulness of time is that the Lawgiver of Mount

Sinai becomes a man; he becomes incarnate. And so, the Lawgiver becomes the Law-keeper, in order to secure salvation for lawbreakers. Oh, what an astounding reality that the offended Lawgiver has been moved within himself from all eternity to give himself, in his Son, in the fulness of time, in order to secure the salvation of lawbreakers. And so, the Lawgiver becomes the Law-keeper. That's why the Old Testament prophesies of him that he would become the Holy One of Israel. That's what's prophesied in Psalm 40 verses 7 and 8, quoted in Hebrews: "Then said I, Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me, I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart." And so, the Lawgiver becomes a Law-keeper. As a man, he perfectly obeys his very own law, and he does that as the substitute of lawbreakers.

But not only does he perfectly obey that law, but then, the Lawgiver allows himself to be treated as a lawbreaker. That's the astonishing reality of what happens on the cross of Calvary. There, the Lawgiver surrenders himself to the curse of his very own law. The Lawgiver allows himself to be treated as a lawbreaker. He allows himself to be wounded for our transgressions, and to be bruised for our iniquities. And he allowed that to happen, why?—that lawbreakers could be reconciled with God; that lawbreakers could be restored into God's favor. That's what the cross is all about. The cross is the Lawgiver hanging on that cross, nailed to that cross. The Lawgiver being made a curse for us. He who knew no sin was made sin that we would become the righteousness of God through him (2 Corinthians 5:21).

Oh, the Lawgiver, allowed himself to receive the ultimate penalty for sin, to be cast out of his Father's presence. The Lawgiver enduring the wrath of his Father, all for such people as we are; all for lawbreakers, for men and women, who by nature, rather than loving God and their neighbor, by nature are inclined to hate God and their neighbor. Oh, but Christ, Paul says, in Colossians 1, verse 20, "Having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself." And so, that is the gospel. The gospel is good news for lawbreakers.

I've said it often here already, but let me say it again. What is the good news of the gospel for sinners such as we are? Well, first of all, we have a Savior who obeyed that law perfectly; oh, that active obedience, his perfect obedience, his perfect keeping of that law is so essential. Thereby he merited for us a flawless righteousness by obeying the law perfectly. Secondly, he has paid the penalty of that law exhaustively. That's the wonder of what happened on Calvary's cross. Because the nature of your and my sin is such that it requires everlasting judgment. That's why hell will endure forever. By our sin, we offend an infinitely holy God. Our sins are therefore infinitely heinous to God. And Christ, by being God and man, through his sacrifice, was able to pay that penalty in full. Precisely because of who he was, that sacrifice has eternal value, so that those who believe in him may know that their sins are forever blotted out by his precious blood. *So the good news is that he has obeyed that law in our place; secondly, that he has paid the penalty for that law exhaustively in our place; and thirdly, that he has silenced the curse of the law eternally.* So that God can now be favorably inclined towards us; so that God can now embrace us; so that because of that perfect sacrifice, we can now be accepted in the beloved.

J. C. Ryle,¹ the well known Bishop of England, a favorite author of ours, he says it so simply. He says, "Christ secured salvation by his doing and his dying." Boys and girls, you can remember that—by his doing, and his dying. By his doing of the law, and by dying as if he were the transgressor of the law. He was made sin, Paul said, who knew no sin (2 Corinthians 5:21)—the Lawgiver dying in the place of lawbreakers, so that lawbreakers can be reconciled with God and be restored in his favor.

¹ John Charles Ryle, aka J. C. Ryle (1816–1900) was an English Anglican bishop, preacher and writer in the evangelical and Calvinist traditions.

3. The Norm for the Christian Walk

And what is, then, the fruit of all that? Ah, you see, redeemed lawbreakers become law-keepers. And that's why what Christ secured on the cross is not only *justification*, that secures for us sinners who believe in Christ a full and free pardon of all of our sins; but he also secured *sanctification*. So in justification, we see the complete pardon of lawbreakers. But in sanctification, we see how the Holy Spirit transforms lawbreakers into law-keepers again, so that we begin to live again as God created us to be, albeit imperfectly. The Catechism will tell us in Lord's Day 44, that we have but a small beginning of that new obedience. But the reality is that the fruit of the redeeming work of Christ accomplished on the cross not only secures our reconciliation, but it also results in restoration.

And that's why we need to understand that the cross does not cancel the law, as some erroneously teach. The cross is the vindication of the law. *On the cross, the glory of that law is fully upheld; the glory of that law is fully vindicated by Christ.* And the result of this, the result of that amazing work of redemption is that reconciled sinners begin to be restored sinners. Let me say it in a different way, a way that's easy to remember. So, when sinners, when such as we are, when lawbreakers, when they come to Christ, when they trust in Christ, when they embrace Christ, when they close with Christ, they also become like Christ. So let me say that again. Those that come to Christ, become like Christ. Those two are inseparably connected. It's two sides of one coin—those two benefits: justification—the pardon of lawbreakers; and sanctification—the restoration of lawbreakers to become law-keepers again. Those are two sides of one coin. It is impossible to be redeemed by Christ and not to live a life in obedience to Christ. Those two belong inseparably together.

That's why Paul said it so beautifully in 1 Corinthians 1, verse 30, “But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.” And so, for the believer, obedience to God's law becomes the desire and the longing of his soul. That's why I read all of Romans chapter 7. In the second half of Romans 7, we hear Paul, the godly Paul, groaning, groaning under the reality of his indwelling sin. But at the same time, he says, And nevertheless, even though I often end up doing what I don't want to do, and I often fail to do what I desire to do, nevertheless, “I delight in the law after the inner man” (verse 22). That's it. That's the Christian.

And so, for the Christian, that law that condemned him, that law now becomes the norm of his life. And Christ emphasized that many times. Let me just read a few excerpts from John 14: verses 15, 21, and 23. He said, “If ye love me, keep my commandments.” “He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me.” “If a man love me, he will keep my words.” That's it. Because, you see, all of Scripture is ultimately an exposition of Matthew 22, verses 37 through 40. All moral precepts, all that Scripture teaches us about what God requires of us, can all be brought back to those two foundational commandments. And that's why the psalmist says, “O how love I thy law! it is my meditation all the day” (Psalm 119:97).

Open your Bibles and turn with me to 1 John 2, verses 3 through 5, which emphasizes this very, very clearly. And there, we read God's Word: “And hereby”—“hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments. He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him.” Because, congregation, you cannot be in Christ and not become like Christ. You cannot be united to the living Word without being obedient to his written Word. That's the connection, you see. The Christian is united to the living Word. And when you are united to the living Word, you will manifest it by your obedience to the written Word. And

so, you cannot claim—that’s why Jesus said, “Not everyone that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father” (Matthew 7:21).

And so, the Christian, by grace, begins to answer again to the purpose for which we were made. By grace, the Christian is a man or woman who, again, begins to love God with heart, soul, mind, and strength, and endeavors, by grace, to love our neighbor as ourself. Because that’s God’s revealed will. And that’s why the ultimate outcome of redemption is that God’s redeemed people will forever perfectly obey Matthew 22, verses 37 through 40. Because God’s law is eternal. God’s law is the transcript of his mind.

And therefore, congregation, let’s examine ourselves. “For this is the love of God,” John writes, “that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous” (1 John 5:3). That’s why the psalmist says, “O how love I thy law! it is my meditation all the day.” And that’s why it’s so important for us to abide in Christ. Oh, he says abide in me; abide in my Word and I will abide in you. And the more we abide in him, the more our life will become a Christ-like life. He says, when you abide in me and I in you, you will bring forth much fruit to the glory of my Father. And why is that to the glory of the Father? Oh, it is to his glory when he sees in our life that by his grace, we have again become law-keepers; we begin to function according to what God originally created us to be.

And so, congregation, what is your state? What’s your condition? Lawbreakers? Or have you, too, as a lawbreaker, taken refuge to this amazing Savior? Have you taken refuge to the Lawgiver who became a man, who became a Law-keeper, and who was treated as a lawbreaker in order to save a wretch like you, so that you, a lawbreaker, worthy of God’s everlasting judgment and curse, that you could be reconciled to God and restored in his favor?

And congregation, in terms of next week, the Lord’s Supper, we can examine ourselves by this. We cannot claim to love Christ unless our life demonstrates that we love and honor his Word. Those two belong inseparably together. When Christ is precious to us, that means his Word will be precious to us, as we pointed out to you this morning.

And so, congregation, what is your attitude towards the law of God? Have you learned the essential truths of the gospel that your only hope is in this Christ? This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, to save lawbreakers, so that lawbreakers can be reconciled with God. Thanks be unto God for the unspeakable gift of his only begotten Son. Amen.

Let us pray.

Our gracious God and Father, we come to thee at the end of this day and of this service, and we give thee thanks for the proclamation of thy Word. O Lord, we are overwhelmed by the beauty and glory of the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. Oh, the reality that the Lawgiver, to save lawbreakers, became the Law-keeper in our place, but also allowed himself to be treated as a lawbreaker, who though he knew no sin, was made sin, that we could become the righteousness of God through him, that was made a curse, in order that we could be blessed. Thanks be to thee, O God, for this precious Christ. And Lord, we pray that, by grace, our lives would demonstrate that having been saved by this Christ, that our desire is to honor him by honoring his Word. And so, help us to examine ourselves in light of what we have heard tonight. Go with us now to our homes. Give us an edifying evening, that we may reflect on what we have heard today. Go with us into this coming week. Bless the labor of our hands. Protect those that will be travelling. Prepare us for the next Lord’s Day that we may come to thy house next Lord’s Day as those that hunger and thirst after righteousness, hunger and thirst after Christ, to be fed and nourished at his table. We ask it in his name. Amen.