

It can be as simple as a horn going off in a game. Or it might be the tape stretched across the race track. Or it might be the bell going off in the factory. These all signal the end. It might be the end of a game 6 where the team wins the Western Conference Finals. It might be the end of a race which will be our parade float and VBS theme. It might be the end of a long day of work. When it's the end it's the end.

We take pride in getting to the end of things; ending a book, ending a sporting event strong, or ending our lives wealthy. But we can also hold on to things too. Having a system of laws is one thing humanity has an iron grip on. In fact everyday more laws are added to the point where it's laughable for you to know all the laws you're obligated to keep. There's no end of the law in sight.

That's the world's law though. God's Law is a different story. God's got something to teach us in the second lesson about his Law. It might come as a surprise to us who hold on to law as so important. Important because we think that just the right combination of laws and keeping them will lead to pleasant lives. But with God it's...

**The end of the Law  
Nailed to the cross  
Gives way to reality**

Every state is crazy about laws and every state has crazy laws. In Oklahoma whaling is illegal. Where you'll find an ocean to go whaling I don't know, but someone thought it had to be written into the law. Ladies, if you did your own hair this morning, apparently that's illegal in Oklahoma. Crazy or not all laws on the books apply to you. God too seems crazy about laws. Some of his laws seem sensible like do not steal. Others more crazy like not wearing a garment made from two kinds of material. He had laws to tell the Israelites when to worship like remember the Sabbath day. There were laws to govern moral behavior like do not murder. With so many laws the Israelites got law crazy too. They actually thought keeping them was getting them somewhere.

I have to imagine it got complicated and probably overwhelming with all the laws. Another law just meant another chance to break it. The law accused and the accusations never ended because the people never kept the laws perfectly. The law became a burden. Finally it made them enemies of God. They were as good as dead to him. Convicted by the law they deserved the punishments of the law. Being found guilty they deserved death.

Have you reminded yourself of God's expectations lately? Think of the laws you may have broken on the car ride over here. Not even God's laws but the government's laws. Speed limits, yielding, and stopping. Then there are God's laws. Thinking about another person not your spouse in an inappropriate manner, being greedy, selfish of time, gossiping, despising God's Word, and lying. We know God's expectations. We know we've failed. Do we care? Our comfort or our time seem more important. We're dead lawbreakers who have violations of a written law code hanging over our heads.

Now is the end of the law. It's the end of trying to be perfect, the end of trying to earn God's favor, and the end of trying to win God's approval. **"When you were dead in your sins...God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins, having canceled the written code, with its regulations, that was against us and that stood opposed to us; he took it away, nailing it to the cross."** God raised Jesus to life and with that resurrection came full forgiveness for all. The law that condemned us is the same law that God took away. Grace and forgiveness is a fact from a God who ended the law. All his demands in the law are canceled. How? He nailed it to the cross of Jesus. Your list of sins, my list of sins, all the laws that accuse us daily, all of them were nailed to the cross with Jesus. They died there as did he. Jesus' death is the end of the law, completely.

Rulers and authorities get their power from the law. Police have power because the law gives them something to measure your behavior against. If it doesn't make it you're charged with a crime. Satan knows God's law backwards and forwards. It's where he gets his power, because he gets to point the finger at you and me when we break it. But Jesus died and so the law is ended, nailed to the cross of Christ. **"And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross."** Satan's power is gone. He can't accuse you anymore. The enemy of believers stands with no cover, his ultimate weapon removed. With no enemy holding you back you can live clinging to the cross of Christ. You can live in joy of forgiveness of sins. You can live for Christ.

After seeing Jesus die on the cross and rise from the tomb the disciples had to get used to a new reality. It was a world where the Laws of Moses didn't apply anymore. God didn't dictate where and when to worship. The festivals and celebrations weren't commanded anymore. They had free and open access to God. All of it was because of Christ Jesus their Savior. The shadows they had grown so used to were gone. The Law was gone and it gave way to a new reality.

Because you're law abiding citizens you don't live in constant fear of the law. Break the law and you will be afraid. Jews lived much the same way, although they should've been much more worried. Bring the wrong amount of grain for a sacrifice, become a judged lawbreaker. Touch something unclean, become a judged lawbreaker. Start Passover on the wrong day, forget to celebrate the Day of Atonement, work too much on the Sabbath, and become a judged lawbreaker. It was frustrating, but every law was good and had a purpose from God. Every time someone didn't keep these perfectly they were reminded that something better and more important was coming soon. Problem was people got so used to looking at the shadows that they didn't see the reality when it came.

Here we might think about the third commandment, the one printed for you on the front cover of the service folder. **Observe, or remember, the Sabbath day by keeping it holy.** Children are taught that means you go to church on Sunday, you attend Sunday school, and you give offerings to church. You strive to be faithful. Figure God's probably happy with twice a month. Makes us feel like we can check another commandment as completed. But for God it's not about coming and getting attendance marked off. It isn't about making sure we're in church at least on Christmas and Easter. It isn't about coming two out of four weeks. Truth is we've violated the third commandment whether we're regular every week or only coming once a month. We violated it because we missed what it was really about. We tried turning it into something God would give us credit for. We expected to earn a little of his grace.

There's no room for you to earn anything in the third commandment or any other command of God. Those commandments don't apply to you anymore. Christ Jesus kept all the commandments for you perfectly as God required. Christ Jesus is the reality that all the commandments and especially the third one pointed ahead to. **"These are a shadow of the things that were to come; the reality, however, is found in Christ."** Christ kept the law perfectly. You can't, he did. Christ Jesus did it all and completed it all and gave it all to us freely.

Now get this, the third commandment and every other command given by God do apply to you. Not to judge you or condemn you. Not for you to earn God's favor or win forgiveness. It never was about those. The law is our guide to help us understand what is God pleasing, what shows him thanks. Don't let people substitute tradition for Christ. Traditions, festival days, certain foods, fasting, or praying can't help you be saved. Even just coming to worship on Sunday won't save you. The reality is Christ. Connecting with God's Word is most important. It happens every time you open God's Word, get into a Bible class, take a child to Sunday school, or share Jesus with someone else. Notice where those connect with Sunday. They are why we're here, to get into God's Word, to grow in faith by hearing what Jesus did for you. This is the reality after the end of the law.

God ended the law in dramatic fashion. When Jesus died on the cross the law ended. Jesus' resurrection assures us the law is ended, we are free, we are forgiven. We aren't judged anymore but rather we focus on the reality that is Christ. After what he did for us and offered us in his love we have no trouble changing our life. We have no trouble living for him. We have no trouble with remembering the Sabbath, being in church, but most importantly hearing God's Word for the strengthening of our faith. We have no trouble because the law is ended, the reality is Christ.